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Impressions That Remained



The Author, aged about five

*IMPRESSIONS
THAT REMAINED*

*M*emoirs

By ETHEL SMYTH

Introduction by ERNEST NEWMAN



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1946

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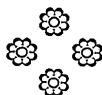
IN MEMORY OF
M E P
(THE HON. LADY PONSONBY)
AND OF OUR LONG FRIENDSHIP

1890—1916

I find Lady Ponsonby, the wise judge, the firm Liberal, more and more delightful; at last one feels she is getting old—she is eighty-two. She is like a fine flame kindled by sea-logs and sandlewood—good to watch and good to warm the mind at, and the heart too.

EDITH SICHELL (1914)

INTRODUCTION



REVIEWING Ethel Smyth's *Impressions That Remained* when it was first published in England I expressed the opinion that this was one of the half-dozen best autobiographies in the English language. This estimate has been confirmed by a recent re-reading of it for the present American edition. But there are several other books by the same author equally worth reading, for Ethel Smyth was one of the most remarkable women of her epoch; and I am glad that a request from Mr. Alfred Knopf to furnish an Introduction to this new edition affords me an opportunity of telling the American musical public more about her than is contained in her first book.

The autobiography may be trusted to tell its own story so far as it goes. But it was issued in 1919, and a great deal happened between then and the author's death in 1944. The memoirs, apart from a brief reference in the Epilogue to friends or incidents of the years immediately following, carry us only as far as 1892. Writing as she did in 1918 her scope was necessarily restricted here and there by the fact that several people who had played a considerable part in her life-story were still alive. One of these was the Ex-Empress Eugénie of France, with whom she was on terms of close friendship for more than a quarter of a century from 1890 onwards, the Empress's English estate at Farnborough Hill being close to the Smyth house at Frimley and to later residences of Ethel. It would obviously have been impossible for the author to write about the Empress at any length or with any freedom while she was still alive. She died, at the age of ninety-five in July 1920 — a year or so after the publication of the *Impressions*; and in her second book, *Streaks of Life* (1921), Ethel Smyth painted a portrait of her that is not only fascinating in itself but of value to students and historians of the Second Empire.

The passing of the Empress from the scene also placed the author

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at liberty to indulge in some amusing reminiscences of the old Queen Victoria, with whom she had come into contact through Eugénie: they include the rich story, told with rich humour, of the dreadful breach of etiquette of which Ethel was innocently guilty at an after-dinner reception at Balmoral. At one end of the large room was a fireplace, and in front of this a hearthrug on which, in remote dignity, the Queen was standing with the Empress. "Leading up to the two august ladies," says Ethel,

"was an avenue composed of royal personages — ranged, as I afterwards found out, in order of precedence, the highest in rank being closest to the hearthrug — which avenue, broadening towards its base, gradually became mere ladies and gentlemen of the Court, and finally petered out in a group of Maids of Honour huddled ingloriously in the bay-window."

What Court procedure prescribed was that Ethel should remain among the huddle until she caught the royal eye, curtsy, and await a command to come forward. "Will it be believed," she chuckles,

"that what I did was to advance unconcernedly up the avenue, with a polite intention to say 'How do you do?' to the Queen?"

The error was pardonable, for at that time she knew nothing of the quite necessary etiquette of Courts, and the Empress had obtained a royal command to her to join the party at Balmoral in order that the Queen might become interested in her big work of that period, the Mass in D, and perhaps use her influence to bring it to performance in London. Ethel's description of the scene that followed is typical of her gay humour in all the awkward situations, and they were many, of her life:

"If a young dog strays up the aisle during church no one says anything, no one does anything, but none the less he soon becomes aware that something is wrong. Even so, as the distance between myself and the hearthrug diminished did I become aware that something was very wrong indeed; my cheerful confidence waned and my step faltered. I saw the Queen slightly turn her head, look at me for a second as if I were some strange insect, and resume her conversation with the Empress. If I had been a Brobdingnagian spider as big as a Newfoundland she would not have acted differently. Someone would remove the creature; that was enough. I did not catch the Empress's eye, but I now know that since she could not shriek 'Mon Dieu, n'avancez pas!' she

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must have wished the earth would open and swallow me up. At this moment dear, human Princess Christian, who had come more in contact with low life than the Queen, stepped forward and shook hands with me — and somehow or other, I know not how, I backed away into the obscurity from which I should never have emerged.”

Obviously reminiscences of this kind could not be printed with propriety while the Empress was alive, and so, though many of them fall within the period covered by *Impressions That Remained*, they had to be reserved for a later book. So again with some rich stories about the last of the German Kaisers, whom Ethel saw at close quarters in Berlin before the war of 1914.

The *Impressions* of 1919 and the *Streaks of Life* of 1921 were followed in 1927 by *A Three-Legged Tour in Greece*, a delightful record of a tour, packed with physical hardships, through unfrequented Greece by the indomitable woman of sixty-seven in company with a great-niece of hers. The adventure is told with the infinite zest that had alone made it possible. One episode is Ethel Smyth in a nutshell. The pair had set out one day from Salonica to climb Mount Olympus. Taking what seemed to them the natural way to their goal they found themselves in what turned out to be the extensive grounds of a big sanatorium for the mentally afflicted. Between them and Olympus ran a seven-foot stone wall. Kindly nurses and attendants assured them that there was no way through — they would have to go back and try some other and more round-about route. But Ethel had observed a few gaps in the wall; and over these she scrambled, dragging her young companion after her, and leaving behind them a legend of two mad Englishwomen that is probably told with bated breath in Salonica to this day.

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Her solution of that difficulty was typical of her: she always knew exactly where she wanted to go, and went straight for her goal regardless of obstacles and dangers. In a letter of 1902 she speaks of “the grim unchangeableness of people like me, who, at the age of twelve, found out what my destiny had to be, made tracks for it, and have never swerved from it since.” In the days when she was trying to float her music in Germany more than one opera director and

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conductor was made to feel the torrential force of this "pocket Niagara," as one member of her family circle had described her as a child of fourteen. Always, as at Olympus, she would get where she wanted to be or perish in the attempt. At one time she had set her heart on making her friend Lady Ponsonby read Anatole France. When long persuasion failed she threatened to present Lady Ponsonby with a parrot trained to cackle "Anatole France" *ad infinitum*. "She's quite capable of it, you know," said the Empress Eugénie, who knew her thoroughly; and her friend surrendered at discretion.

"You passionate, stormy-hearted child" was the description of her in 1894 by the man who knew her best, the only man she ever loved. She tells her life-story with such detachment and so much humour, so much comprehension of the souls of others as well as of her own, that it is only by building up a number of scattered hints from many sources into a connected picture that we can realise how greatly she must have suffered at times. The world in general, that knew her only as a passionate fighter for her own and other causes, had no conception of the depth of tenderness and the capacity for pain in her; it saw her, particularly in the final thirty years or so of her life, only as a woman with an obsessing grievance — the frustration of woman in a man-made world. She never flinched from combat, never minced her words. Her immense physical vitality and the exuberance of her temperament must in her younger years have made her company sometimes trying even for the people who loved her most.* She had been inured from childhood to strenuous outdoor sports. She was used to breaking in fractious horses and subduing big dogs. (For the smaller specimens of the dog tribe she never had much liking.) She became a hardy rider to hounds, a mountaineer with nerves of steel, and quite late in life an ardent golfer. Every company she came into in her young days she went through like a hurricane. Even one of her most devoted friends,

* In a novel that made a sensation fifty years ago — *Dodo*, by E. F. Benson (a son of the Archbishop of Canterbury of that time, and a close friend of Ethel Smyth) — she figures as the tempestuous composer Edith Staines. All the lines of the portrait are of course exaggerated for humorous purposes, but it is sufficiently true to the original for us to recognise the storm-and-stress Ethel Smyth of the early years. She accepted the caricature with her usual healthy humour, and was gratified to hear the author himself describe "Edith Staines" as "the one decent character in the book."

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Julia Brewster — the sister of "Lisl" von Herzogenberg — confessed ruefully to her one day in 1884, "One must be *very well* to enjoy you." On one occasion, after what Ethel calls "some extra-fierce argument" after dinner with one of the most dearly loved of her later friends, Lady Ponsonby, she left in a fury the house in which she had been invited to stay the night and bicycled through darkness and rain and storm to her own home, seven miles away. "When I got back," Lady Ponsonby's daughter wrote next day to a common friend, "Ethel had been gone half an hour, and the house was still rocking!"

She made more than houses rock with the thunder of her polemic during the last quarter-century of her life. But underneath all the combativeness was a rare capacity for feeling and inspiring friendship and a passion for love and understanding on the part of others. Take, as a side-light on this aspect of her, her story of her conversation with the Prior of a lonely Italian monastery in 1884, when she was no more than twenty-six. She poured out her heart to him about many things that troubled her, about "the pull of life and the constant longing for calm, the fascination of difficulties and barriers, the need of human contact and affection, the love of one's own ways," and many other things. The old man's advice was, "*Figlia mia, figlia mia*, turn your back on life! — it is the only way." But to turn her back on life was the one thing she could never do. She loved life and work and combat too much for that: she was driven on remorselessly by her daëmon.

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About 1910 some conversations with Hermann Bahr and Lady Constance Lytton aroused her interest in the most troublous political problem of the England of that time — the cause of woman's suffrage; soon afterwards she met the leader of that cause, Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, for whom she conceived an ardent affection, and soon she herself figured as one of the doughtiest fighters for the equal rights of women with men. She resolved to turn her back on music for two years and throw all her energies into the cause. They were two years of torment and anger and suffering such as she had never known before and was never to know again. Upon the ghastly record of that struggle none of us who witnessed it and took
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part in it can ever look back without horror and disgust. There were faults, of course, on both sides. Some of the violences of the women could not escape condemnation at the bar of reason; but their argument — and it was unanswerable — was that the appeal to justice having failed, only unscrupulous and unrelenting violence would avail against the stupidity, the duplicity and the cowardice of the politicians of the time. The last desperate card the women played was the hunger strike in prison. This led, by a sort of tragic necessity, to forcible feeding and the horrible "Cat and Mouse" routine, as it came to be called; afraid to face the public consequences of the death in gaol of some of these women, passionate for martyrdom for the cause, the authorities released them in time to save their lives, re-arrested them when they had regained a little health, and then brought them back to prison again to serve some more of their sentence, and so on in a sort of devils' dance *à deux* of violence and cruelty-born-of-fear that sickened the public conscience. Ethel Smyth, as might have been expected, fought with the gloves off. She was sent to Holloway prison for two months; there, untameable as ever, she conducted the March of the Women — the rousing fighting song she had written for the Women's Suffrage movement, which she was to use again later in the overture to her opera *The Boatswain's Mate* — with a toothbrush as baton from the window of her cell on the third floor while her fellow-prisoners were exercising in the yard.

At the end of the two years she had promised to devote to the cause she went to Egypt (in 1913), partly for the restoration of her broken health, partly to write *The Boatswain's Mate*. The story of that expedition — rich in adventures, like every other episode in her life — she told racily in 1935 in her book *Beecham and Pharaoh*, the first half of which consists of a lively study of the art and the personality of Sir Thomas Beecham. Previously to that had come *A Final Burning of Boats* (1928) — a collection of essays and reminiscences — and *Female Pipings in Eden* (1933), telling, among other things, the story of her struggles to get her works produced. Her autobiography proper was continued, from the point at which she had stopped in *Impressions That Remained*, in her last two books, *As Time Went On . . .* (1936) and *What Happened Next* (1940): this latter shewed her with her mental powers and her

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robust sense of humour still undiminished at the age of eighty-one, in spite of the facts that her income, never a large one, had been hard hit by the failure of some South American investments, and that for some years past music had been an enjoyment barred to her first of all by distorted hearing, then by deafness. She died on the 9th May 1944, at the age of eighty-six. She had been made an honorary Doctor of Music by Durham University in 1910 and by Oxford University in 1926; while in 1922 she received a sort of consolation prize for her disappointments over her music in the form of a D.B.E. (Dame of the British Empire — the female equivalent of a knighthood).

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Her quality as a composer was high, certainly the highest ever achieved by a woman; but this is not the place for an essay on her music. The biographical dictionaries will provide the reader with the long list of her works in various genres; here we are concerned with them only so far as they bear on *Impressions That Remained* and the later sections of her autobiography. That she failed to win adequate public recognition as a composer is indisputable; and though her justifiable anger at the difficulties she had constantly to overcome made her go too far in attributing them mostly to sex-antagonism, there cannot be the least doubt that in her own country her way was sometimes made harder than it should have been by the mere fact that she was a woman. In Germany, where her career began, her work, on its merits alone, had earned the sincere respect of some of the finest German musicians of the period, including Hermann Levi, Nikisch, George Henschel, Mottl and Bruno Walter. Brahms, compelled to admire some of her earliest work, but reluctant to believe that a woman could have produced it, assumed that it had been written by Henschel. So far as the practical day-by-day conditions of the opera house machine permitted, several of the leading German conductors were perfectly willing to produce Ethel Smyth's operas. Her *Fantasio* had been given at Weimar in 1898 and at Karlsruhe in 1901, *Der Wald* in Dresden in 1901 and Berlin in 1902, and *The Wreckers* (under its German title of *Strandrecht*) at Leipzig and Prague in 1906.

In England she found matters more difficult. Her fine Mass in D,

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which Levi rightly declared to be "the strongest and most original work that had come out of England since Purcell's time," was given in London by the Royal Choral Society in 1893, as a result of pressure put upon the Society by its musical President, the Duke of Edinburgh (a son of Queen Victoria), who in turn had had his elbow jogged by the Queen and the Empress Eugénie. It received one performance, and then was not heard anywhere until thirty-one years later, when it was given again in Birmingham. Why that long neglect of a work that still evokes the respect of musicians on the rare occasions when they are allowed to hear it? It is not as if it had been unable to stand up against the competition of other English works in 1893: Ethel Smyth herself asked in 1928, as she might well do, "Will anyone point to the masterpieces of the 'nineties that naturally put its poor nose out of joint? Where are they today?" No answer is possible except that the work was persistently cold-shouldered year after year in her own country for no other reason than that the people in musical power at the time — and later — did not know what to make of a "female composer" who wrote, not music of "feminine charm," but music of as strong intellectual fibre as that of any man. Whether there was anything so definite and conscious as "sex-antagonism" or not, there was certainly in the air a lamentable amount of sex-blindness; had her Mass been brought out as the work of John or Henry Smyth it would have had a different reception from the Press and met with a different fate.

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In her own country, of course, she was hampered, so far as her operas were concerned, by the lack of any organisation for that form of art such as Germany, with its scores of opera houses, has always enjoyed. Our only real opera house was Covent Garden, run by a private Syndicate which made no secret of the fact that, as it could not afford idealistic experiments, it could in general give only works that had proved a success on the Continent. Yet somehow or other Ethel Smyth managed to win a hearing for *Der Wald* at Covent Garden in 1902 and for *The Wreckers* at His Majesty's Theatre in 1909 and at Covent Garden in the following year. In 1911 she gave a concert of her own works at Queen's Hall. Then

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followed, as we have seen, two years of withdrawal from the musical scene, and what she called her Flight into Egypt. She returned to England *via* Germany in May 1914 with the ball apparently at her feet at last. In her pocket were contracts for what would have been an ideal production of *The Wreckers* at Munich (under Bruno Walter), and for *The Boatswain's Mate* at Frankfurt-am-Main. Then, when her long fight seemed to have been won, the Fates dealt her a knock-out blow. The war broke out in August: the German contracts were of course not carried out, and after the war the whole face of things musical was changed. She had lost her footing in Germany and for reasons of international politics could never regain it. At home *The Boatswain's Mate* was produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London in 1916. This was followed by a delicate musical fantasy, *Fête Galante*, at Birmingham in 1923 (later at Covent Garden), and by a second comic opera, *Entente Cordiale*, at the Royal College of Music in 1925 (at Bristol in the following year). By now she was fairly well established in her own country, but of her two best works — those by which she herself declared she must stand or fall, the Mass and *The Wreckers* — the new generation still knew nothing. In 1931 she produced in Edinburgh *The Prison*, a setting of some extracts from a spiritual-metaphysical conversation piece by H. B. Brewster. It was well received there and elsewhere in the provinces, but London's cooler reception of it, as she herself admitted, almost broke her heart.

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For *The Prison* meant more to her inmost self than any other work of hers. This brings us to the subject of Henry Brewster.

When Ethel Smyth went to Leipzig in 1877, at the age of nineteen, she studied, after an unsatisfactory spell at the Conservatorium, with Heinrich von Herzogenberg, who was by common consent the most fully equipped German contrapuntist of his day; his lovely and gifted wife Elisabeth ("Lisl") has left us, in her correspondence with Brahms, some of the acutest musical criticism of the nineteenth century. Ethel soon became *l'enfant de la maison*; the love of Lisl and herself was one of the most beautiful of its kind in history, and the shattering of the union in 1885 was a blow from
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which Ethel never really recovered. It had come about in this way. Lisl's sister Julia had married the eleven years younger Henry B. Brewster, the son of an American father and an English mother, who had been brought up in France and was now living in Italy. It had been understood from the first between him and Julia that if ever a new passion should come into the life of either of them they were to part. In 1882 Ethel Smyth made their acquaintance in Florence; and it was not long before Henry fell in love with the singularly attractive and brilliant girl. Julia, as might have been expected, was unable to bring herself to carry out her agreement with Henry when the testing time he had foreseen arrived, and a vast amount of mischief was made by her mother, who had conceived a malignant hatred for Ethel. Lisl, hurt and uncomprehending, broke off the friendship with her, and, to Ethel's enduring sorrow, died, in 1892, without a word of remembrance. Brewster and Ethel behaved honourably towards Julia: for five years they had no communication with each other, until they met again in London in 1890. After Julia's death he again and again pressed her to marry him, but she could never decide to take that decisive step: to the end of his days — he died in 1908 — he was the centre of her intellectual and emotional life, but she seems to have recognised that marriage and her career as a musician would be incompatible. For the full story the reader must turn to the pages of *As Time Went On . . .* and *What Happened Next*.

Henry Brewster was one of the rarest spirits the earth can ever have produced, a man of fine character, a subtle thinker, a consummate stylist and an incomparable letter-writer; * and his love and admiration for Ethel Smyth over a period of a quarter of a century is the most convincing testimony imaginable to her own exceptional qualities of mind and soul. The lukewarm reception

* His literary output was small — *The Theories of Anarchy and Law* (1887), *The Prison* (1891), *The Statuette and the Background* (1896), and *L'Âme Païenne* (1902). He wrote the original text (in French) of *The Wreckers* (*Les Naufrageurs*); this and another drama, *Buondelmonte*, were published by his son Christopher after his father's death. Ethel Smyth brought out a new edition of *The Prison* at the time when she was writing her own work with that title; and she herself desired that Brewster's letters to her and others should some day be collected and published. She gives copious extracts from them in some of her books. They are certainly unique: Henry James rightly called him "the last of the Great Epistolarists."

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of *The Prison* was a double blow to her; she felt that it struck not only at herself as a composer but at the man whose love and talk had inspired it. For the completion of the story of the pair the reader must be referred to her later books: meanwhile here is *Impressions That Remained* to give the American reader an idea of the quality of the personality and the mental power of one of the most noteworthy women of our time.

ERNEST NEWMAN

PREFACE



WHEN it was suggested that a Preface to this new Edition of *Impressions That Remained* and *Streaks of Life* * would not be amiss, no proposal could have seemed more bewildering to the author. How does one set about giving a new send-off to an old book?

Then came the reflection that every unknown writer who suddenly puts forth into print will often be asked if this was really a maiden effort? Or, in cases like mine, the question may run: "What made you think of writing your memoirs"? And probably nine times out of ten such enquiries are only a matter of polite ritual. Yet some of these kind questioners may really wish for an answer; if so, this is obviously the moment to say that up to Christmas 1917 I had never attempted anything more ambitious than articles on the Suffrage, and further that the inception of *Impressions* was due to a not infrequent combination of ill-luck and happy chance.

I was in Paris, blending war-work with daily visits to a celebrated aurist, and at that time had reason to believe that to listen to music, or think in terms of music, would always be as intolerable to me as it was then. Twice a week I dined alone with a very dear friend, Count Joachim Clary, one of *les enfants de la maison* at the Empress Eugénie's English home. I had first known Clary as a clever, good-looking, active, rather spoilt youth; now, though still a young man, he was a cripple, scarcely able to move hand or foot, his limbs twisted and gnarled with arthritis, in constant pain day and night, and totally blind. Yet his originality, his culture, his unconquerable sense of humour and, above all, his superb courage, made our friendship one of the assets of my life.

One evening, when I had been recounting some absurd childish

* *Streaks of Life*, another volume of memoirs by Dame Ethel Smyth, was published by Mr. Knopf in 1922.

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adventures, he said: "It's a queer thing; we know each other so well, yet of your life before we met I know nothing." And he went on to suggest that these early experiences, so typically English and already so remote, would be well worth writing down, and exactly the sort of thing to read to an invalid after dinner.

I at once set to work and wrote a few chapters, which Clary approved. Whereupon I showed them to another friend of mine, Madame Bulteau, who, under the pseudonym "Jacque Vontade" had written a remarkable book called *L'Âme des Anglais*. We all called her "Toche," and I never knew what Christian name this symbol stood for; but to me and many, many others she was what some old Greek has called "the theatre of my actions."

Some day no doubt a literary monument will be raised to the memory of this wonderful woman. In touch with some of the most brilliant spirits of France and other countries, surrounded by a faithful band of privileged intimates, she was, I truly believe, one of the most passionately adored people that can ever have existed on this planet — the life, the hope, the support, the inspiration of everyone, male or female, who came into her orbit. I know of two English friends of hers besides myself, who, when the time comes, will have a hand in the upraising of that monument, Edmund Gosse and Maurice Baring, the latter of whom wrote to me last autumn when she died: "Have you read the O. Henry book, and do you remember what he said about his fits of depression, how there were days on which he 'wouldn't bet on himself'? What she did was to make you bet on yourself." Nothing could more perfectly describe the chief action of that noble, generous spirit; and I ask myself what greater service one mortal can render another.

Madame Bulteau's opinion of my early chapters coinciding with Clary's, I submitted them to Maurice, who had come from the front to spend a few terribly busy days in Paris, and his verdict was the same as the others. Soon afterwards I went back to England and was setting to work in real earnest when news came of Clary's wholly unexpected death. Just before I left he had remarked one day that his life might well drag on for years, and I had replied that in the somewhat similar case of my brother Johnny the same thing had been said, yet the end came suddenly and painlessly. (I repeated this conversation to the Empress, whose views on how to

Preface

talk to sick people are described in *Streaks of Life*, and her caustic comment was: "*Alors c'est comme cela que vous consolez vos amis!*") One could only be thankful, of course, that Clary's sufferings were over, yet I often wish he had lived to see the book finished.

One more thing I should like to say. In writing what I have hitherto written — and future efforts, if any, will be in the same case — it has been my ardent hope and belief that many readers would say to themselves: "I am not an artist, nor, so far as I am aware, have I ever attempted to hit any difficult mark; yet this woman's experiences are curiously like my own!"

If the issue of a new edition may be taken as proof that this was no vain hope, nothing could make me happier as a musician. For I hold that the permanent quality of an artist's work depends in some mystical manner on the genuineness and multiplicity of his points of contact with life. More than this is needful, of course; the not wholly negligible matter of talent, for instance; also the gift of self-expression and adequate technical equipment. But the indispensable foundation — in my opinion at least — is a very close touch with reality; a touch, moreover, that has to be constantly tested and readjusted as the years roll on.

Finally, to conclude in the old French manner with a *moralité*, it seems to me that if one can but grow wisdom and determination enough to keep up this difficult process to the very end, aided and abetted by the one sense that grows stronger with advancing years, the sense of humour, then, I venture to think, no one need be afraid of growing old.

1923.

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Introduction

ONCE, in a roomful of people, someone suddenly said: "I wonder what becomes of all the delightful and interesting children one has known." Startled by this remark we began discussing it, and came to the conclusion that nearly all children are interesting and delightful, just as every coin fresh from the Mint has a certain charm — but unfortunately, as time goes on, the original design loses its sharpness. Then someone else went on to say that if faithfully written, the memoirs of any child would be good reading. It was in this spirit that to while away a winter of forced inactivity I began to write mine, having no readers in view at the moment but one or two amiably inquisitive friends.

Early memoirs are necessarily egoistic, for a child's recollections are strung together on the thread of its own little personality. Nor, among such petty joys and sorrows, triumphs and humiliations, can much picking and choosing be done. What you remember was evidently important in your own eyes and there is no other guide to follow. If anyone should deem the result in this case of general interest, it will be because, like the immortal *Diary of a Nobody*, the daily life described in the first part of these chronicles might be that of any English family in analogous circumstances, and my own confessions the autobiography of any child.

Once girlhood is past, the story perforce becomes less impersonal. But even here, seeing that the record ends when it became the question of a public musical career, maybe others who have felt the pull of what lies to right and left of the road they are trying to follow will find in my later adventures something akin to their own. Anyhow it is in that hope and belief that I have recounted them.

One word more. Contemporary correspondence is often the most interesting part of a book such as this, yet to use it freely in the text breaks up the narrative. For this reason I have interpolated six appendix sections, containing letters from or about persons concerned in the story. And it is certain that the large class of readers who are bored by other people's letters will welcome a method that simplifies wholesale skipping.

Impressions That Remained

Part I

THE SMYTH FAMILY ROBINSON



CHAPTER I. . . . to 1867

THE TITLE of this section of my memoirs, "The Smyth Family Robinson," is a nickname given by one of my five brothers-in-law to the family he allied himself with. Uncle Charles Scott expressed the same idea in other words when he declared the Irish strain in our blood was predominant; but we were only Irish of the Pale and our branch had been back in England for three generations. Originally of Heath Hall, Yorkshire, where the parent stock still survives, we went to Ireland in 1625, and did so well there as to absorb large parts of Meath, Westmeath, and Queen's County, habitually filling most of the bishoprics with ourselves and our relations.

At one time I was delighted to believe, as my father, who was vague on such matters, told us was the case, that our direct ancestor was a certain Edward Smyth, Bishop of Down and Connor, who, in his sub-character of chaplain to William of Orange, drafted the laws concerning Irish Catholics. Later, being seized with a passion for genealogy, and incidentally becoming acquainted with the nature of those laws, I was glad to find that instead of deriving from the person responsible, I should say, for half the religious troubles that have since convulsed Ireland, our progenitor was his younger brother, of whom nothing was to be learned except that his name was John. In straight line from this obscure Smyth, travelling always via younger sons, we arrive at my great-grandfather, who having been destined for the Army had the sense to emigrate to Liverpool and try his hand at banking. Reversing this idea, my grandfather,

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again younger son of a younger son, began life in the Light Cavalry, fought in the Peninsular War, and ended by carrying on the bank in Macclesfield.

The only touch of drama — mild drama — that enlivens the family history is that during the invasion by Prince Charlie my great-grandparents pursued what seems to have been the usual course in those days under such circumstances, and retired with the rest of the country families to a spot unlikely to be visited by the soldiery, the Peak of Derby. Meanwhile their home, "The Fence," was occupied by Charles Edward and his suite, who left behind them some curious glass hunting goblets, one beautifully engraved with the Prince's portrait, the Order of the Holy Ghost and the *queue* being executed with special care. My father maintained it was very wrong to call a lawful heir "the Pretender"; none the less he always styled this relic "the Pretender's glasses" as did his father and grandfather before him.

In the course of my genealogical investigations the gratifying fact was established that our line of Smyths were admirable God-fearing people, for the most part with pronounced literary tastes; but among them all there is not one single outstanding personality, except perhaps my bachelor great-uncle William Smyth, Master of Peterhouse College, Cambridge.

When he was a young man at the University his father's bank failed, as did many a bank during the French Revolution; finding himself bereft of everything save an "elegant scholarship," which someone seems to have brought to the notice of Mr. Sheridan, he became tutor to his son Tom. A memoir of Sheridan, printed privately in his old age, is written with a discretion which, though one admires, one cannot help regretting, for life at Isleworth must have been a fantastic experience. To get a sight of the master of the house was evidently next door to impossible, so incalculable were his movements, so irregular his hours; and during his prolonged absences from home, in vain would the tutor write suggesting change of air or change of curriculum for the pupil — in vain beg for funds to run the household, incidentally mentioning his own salary, for Sheridan had acquired the dun-haunted man's habit of never opening letters. Nor was it possible to follow him to London and force an interview, for, in perpetual terror lest some misfortune should

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befall his idolized and totally neglected boy (who was not even allowed to skate for fear of drowning), the orders were that under no circumstances whatever was the tutor to leave his charge for a moment. Thus the two unfortunates would find themselves stranded in some seaside lodging-house long after everyone else had left the place — penniless, living on the precarious credit of the great man's name, yet not daring to go home without permission. In fact this little record of an inmate's experience in that household is just what you would expect; nevertheless the main note is mingled admiration for the fallen genius, who had captured my great-uncle's imagination when an Eton boy, and distress at the ravages of his vices and weaknesses. One gathers there were occasional scenes between the two men, but never once, drunk or sober, did Sheridan fail to treat his subordinate as a gentleman and an equal; in fact nothing stands out more strongly in these hyper-delicate pages than the loveliness of their subject.

"The Professor," as he was called in the family, also published a book of *Lectures on the French Revolution*, which I have never read, and a volume of *English Lyrics* in mild amatory vein. Everyone in those days wrote verses; otherwise it is inexplicable that an intelligent man should have printed such rubbish — and intelligent he really was. In an autobiographical note, far the most interesting though not the funniest part of the *English Lyrics*, he remarks that his father could repeat by heart almost any passage you chose to call for in "classics such as Swift, Churchill, Dryden, and Shakespeare," and that on one occasion, after reading Thomson's "Palemon and Lavinia" only once through, he repeated it without a mistake.

My father used to tell an odd little story about his uncle and Jane Austen, who were close friends. It appears that the authoress, wishing to get at his real opinion of one of her novels, put on a friend to pump him, concealing herself meanwhile behind a curtain. The verdict was luckily all that could be desired till the Professor remarked he was not quite certain as to her orthodoxy, having detected slightly Unitarian leanings in her later works; upon which Jane Austen burst forth from her hiding-place, indignantly crying: "That's not true!" One may question whether any degree of intimacy justifies such a stratagem, but no doubt she knew her

Impressions that Remained

man; anyhow this curious sidelight on an elusive personality almost atones for the *English Lyrics*.

In another great friend of his, Amelia Opie, wife of the painter — a literary celebrity in the style of her contemporaries Mrs. Radcliffe and Mrs. Barbauld — I always took interest, because, after being for forty years the most inveterate woman of the world, she suddenly joined the Society of Friends and devoted herself to philanthropy mitigated with travel. It appeared that her adoring but home-loving husband persuaded her to try authorship in order to wean her from society; the result was that she at once became famous and went out more than ever.

The Professor was our high-water mark in the way of distinction, and I have sometimes said to myself that though it must be pleasant to have brilliant ancestors, the possible legacy of an exhausted nervous system is perhaps not worth the glory of a flaming pedigree. In fact it is mainly to the consistent level of decent mediocrity in our own that I attribute the extraordinary health and high spirits of the branch I am concerned with in these pages.

One day during the lifetime of my brother Johnny, who had a turn for mathematics, and whose memory was accurate, we children started trying to fix the date of our earliest recollections, but it was found impossible to decide exactly when the first event I recall took place; namely, an attempt to jump out of the low pony-carriage as it was crawling up St. Mary Cray's Hill, which ended in my falling on my back in the road, having failed to observe that Johnny and the groom always jumped in the direction the carriage was moving in. Thus my conscious life began with the first of a long series of croppers — not a bad beginning.

We lived in those days at Sidcup, then quite a country place, selected by my father as not too far from Woolwich, where, on his return to England after the Indian Mutiny, he took up the command of the Artillery Depot. The Indian forces to which he belonged were then in course of fusion with the regular Army, and being very popular, and having served with distinction, he was considered the right man for a task requiring both tact and common sense. I can see him now, starting for the daily ride to his office mounted on his eighteen-hand charger Paddy, who later filled the

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parts of hunter, brougham horse, and coal-cart horse with good humour and propriety. I have even ridden him myself, and an old friend once told us his first sight of me was wrong end upwards, suspended by the foot on Paddy's off side with my long hair sweeping the grass, the saddle having slipped round in Bramshill Park. As a tiny child I firmly believed the horse-radish served with the Sunday joint was plucked from the white saddle-marks on Paddy's high withers, and for this reason had an aversion to horse-radish sauce years after I knew the truth about it.

At the time of that leap from the pony-carriage the Sidcup household consisted of my paternal grandparents, who came to live with us after the Mutiny, my parents, and five children — four girls and a boy. As time went on, two more girls arrived on the scene, Bob, my youngest brother, being born the year after we left Sidcup; in fact we eventually blossomed into one of the large families that in those days were rather the rule than the exception.

Looking at the portrait of what our friend George Henschel called my grandfather's "dear old port-wine face," one remembers the legend that his last action before he died was to stroke his stomach and remark with a chuckle: "To think of the hogsheads of port I have consoomed in my time!" He might well say so, for he lived to be ninety-six — a splendid, intensely alive old man whom I should have worshipped in later years, whereas then, alas! I only felt a child's repulsion to extreme old age. He always wore a black velvet skull-cap which was associated in my mind with wizards, and I disliked having to kiss his scrubby apple-red old cheek, wondering uneasily why there was always white powder on the lapels of his coat. Again, I detested a favourite joke of his, which was to say very slowly, when a certain dreaded hour struck: "Shadrach . . . Meschach . . . and . . . To BED WE GO!" — the last words with a sudden roar. But what chiefly roused my disapproval was his comment when Johnny, who had put something very hot into his mouth, instantly spat it out; "Well done, my boy," cried Grandpapa, "a fool would have swallowed it!" Being imbued with nursery notions of pretty behaviour, I was shocked at the coarseness of the males of the family.

The other day, examining old papers of his, I came across some cuttings from the *Manchester Courier* which throw, I think, a pic-

Impressions that Remained

turesque light on the past. After leaving the Army he had been given command of the Macclesfield Squadron of the Cheshire Yeomanry, a force much in request during the frequent riots, and with two of these incidents the extracts are concerned. Here is the first:

Our squadron of yeomanry reached home on Thursday and formed in the Market Place where they were addressed by Captain Smyth; we give the speech as nearly as we could collect it.

“Gentlemen — It is with the most heartfelt satisfaction that I address you on your return from performing as good and loyal subjects your duty to your King and country. Gentlemen, I am desired by my brother officers to convey to you their best thanks for the alacrity with which you mustered, and for your soldier-like conduct on this, as on all former occasions, when your country’s weal has required your protection. With their thanks I beg you will accept my own. But, gentlemen, I am instructed to convey thanks to you from a much higher authority, from that distinguished officer, Major Gen. Sir James Lyon, with whom I have had the honour of an interview, and who has personally expressed to me the high estimation in which he holds your valuable services. The General deeply regrets the necessity for calling you out at this inclement season of the year; but the readiness with which you obeyed the call tends only to prove, that neither the scorching sun of autumn, nor the chilling blasts of winter, can abate the ardour that glows in your manly bosoms. The General further informed me that the call for your services was not only necessary, but most urgent, for that intelligence of a most alarming nature had been received on oath from various quarters, and from sources the most respectable, all agreeing that a simultaneous rising was intended to take place on Sunday last from Glasgow to Stockport, and in Nottingham. Proud am I to say, that our town was not in the list of those enumerated. No, gentlemen, our town is a loyal town, and I trust it will never lose its fair fame by the base conduct of the few radical wretches whose dwelling is amongst us. Gentlemen, when I last had the pleasure of addressing you, I told you those radical reformers never durst, nor ever would, stand the charge of yeomanry, and I still feel persuaded they never will. Of their diabolical intentions there can be no doubt, and they would ere this have been carried into execution, had their proceedings not been closely watched. Gentlemen, I again thank you for your attention, and you can now return to your homes with the universal satisfaction of having done your duty, and I hope

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you will be allowed to enjoy the festivities of the approaching season with peace and comfort. And ere you depart, I trust our worthy chaplain who is on my left will give you his blessing."

The next extract shows that my grandfather had underrated the power of the "radical wretches" to stir up strife:

Prior to the dismissal of the squadron of horse they were addressed in an animated speech by one of their officers, Capt. Smyth, a gentleman who has seen much service in the field, and had a command at the storming of Seringapatam. His observations, as nearly as we could collect, were these — "Your conduct has, during the four days and nights elapsed in this service, been so steady and determined, and your discipline so exemplary, that henceforth I shall have the same confidence in you as I have ever had in the regular forces of the crown. To your firm and cool intrepidity it is owing that we return from the achievement of an arduous service with our pistols yet undischarged, and our swords unstained with our countrymen's blood. How far this moderation has been met with a corresponding temper by the deluded foes of England's peace, your own dwellings, cowardly assailed in our absence, are here before your eyes to testify. Happy for Macclesfield that we were far hence while the wretched enterprise was in progress! Had we returned in the night of yesterday, according to our orders first received, justice had demanded a sacrifice the possibility of which I shudder to contemplate.

"Farewell, my friends, and distant, far distant, be the day which shall arm us against the hearts of our fellow townsmen."

I cannot quite understand why the counter-orders which enabled the foes of England to escape retribution should be a subject for rejoicing; perhaps this sentiment was merely a rhetorical flourish.

My grandmother left no impression on my mind; and as my father and mother will be described later, I will pass on to my own generation, beginning with the eldest, Alice, supposed never to have been naughty in her life, and whose goodness one governess said was "positively monotonous." Of this specially beloved sister I chiefly remember that she said her Catechism in what we used to call a squeaky voice — that is, a voice to which she has been prone all her life when reading family prayers. I also remember that she once said to me: "You have a very strong will; *why not will to be good?*" and that this tribute to my strength of character

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secretly delighted me. Whether the advice was followed I cannot say, but to harness the pride of a child to the cart is a good receipt.

Johnny, the next of the family, was at that time my model, my tastes being essentially boyish — a trait he met with mingled disapproval and patronage. I soon noticed that I climbed higher and was generally more daring than he, and no doubt dwelt on the fact, which would partly account for a certain lack of sympathy between us. Being himself of a quiet orderly disposition, perhaps too he disliked the violent ways that made my mother call me “the stormy petrel”; anyhow I always thought he judged me severely.

After Johnny came Mary; two years later I arrived — the first of the bunch to be born in England, all the rest being little Indians. When the Mutiny broke out, our parents were at home on leave, having brought with them Alice and Johnny, who were getting too old for the climate. As often happened in those days, the baby, Mary, had been left behind in charge of a cousin, the idea being to return to her in a few months; and while my father was hurrying back alone to India, Mary went through all sorts of vicissitudes, was carried off to a place of safety by her ayah, hidden behind a haystack, and so on, till arrangements could be made for sending her home.

My father left England on June 30, and I was born on the 23rd day of the following April — a ten months’ child. In pre-suffragette days I was proud of this fact, having heard that such children are generally boys and always remarkable! Since then I have ascertained that no one but the most benighted old Gamps ever held such a theory, and wonder if the latter part of it was an invention for soothing paternal doubts and suspicions.

Mary and I shared a bed, an uncomfortable arrangement for her, as I was afraid of the dark and apt to awake in the night demanding comfort. She eventually insisted on a bolster, which our nurses called “the old man,” being put between us under the bottom sheet, but promised to hold my hand on Monday nights till I fell asleep, and I spent the whole week looking forward to Monday. I was also terrified of churchyards, and as the church was close by, used to slip out after dark and force myself to walk a given distance, say twenty steps, along the path between the tombstones, rushing home in agony after the ordeal was over.

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There were four years between me and the next child, Nina, a gap accounted for, as I used innocently to explain to enquirers, by my father's absence in India. I well remember the change when I ceased being the spoiled baby; details escape me but not the ache and fury of it. The births of the other two Sidcup children, Violet and Nelly, evidently took place, but I remember nothing about these events; indeed, my early recollections, when not concerning myself only, are chiefly connected with Johnny and Mary.

When my grandfather died (1864) Grandmama went to live with one of my aunts, and my parents moved into the best bedroom.



CHAPTER II. . . . to 1867

OF my own generation, all of whom except Johnny are alive at the present day, I shall speak as seen through my childish eyes; of my parents, who are both dead, I shall try presently to give the impression their personalities left with me in later years. But first let me describe our home.

Sidcup Place, in the parish of Footscray, Kent, was originally a small, square, Queen Anne house, separated from the main road by a high wall covered with ivy, between the two a strip of garden. A wing had been added later, along the first story of which, facing the real garden, which was at the back, ran what seemed to me then an endless gallery, the most ideal of places for children to rush up and down and yell in. Connected in my mind with this gallery is one of those mysterious incidents that are never really cleared up, and which I for one believed was a case of crime too heinous to be explained to good children. A cousin of ours, Alfred S., had apparently shut the cat up in a small cupboard which stood in a certain place at the end of the gallery — a place in which an imprisoned cat should have had every chance of advertising her presence. But she made no sound; perhaps she was a delicate-minded cat.

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Whether she actually died of starvation or was discovered in the nick of time I forget, but from that moment Alfred became a sinister figure in our collection of cousins, and when he died a few years later, I always believed the cat had something to do with it.

There were roomy stables and a big old-fashioned granary mounted on stone pillars, yet none the less infested, so they told us, by rats — a useful legend. The grounds were charming; on one side of the croquet lawn was the most enormous acacia I have ever seen, the bloom of which never failed, and on the other a fine cedar. Beyond was a walled kitchen garden with flowery borders and rose patches, and the object of our lives was to mount the walls, unobserved, from the far side in quest of forbidden fruit. Once I remember the gardener, who had stealthily removed the ladder, suddenly appearing with a long switch; we flew along the top, he at the bottom of the wall calling out as we reached the spot where the ladder should have been: "Now I've got yer, yer little warmints," and I am glad to say I followed Johnny's lead and took a flying leap down into safety, a drop of eight or nine feet — not a mean performance for a child of less than that number of years.

Beyond the kitchen garden was a shrubbery that seemed to me then what the woods in Rossetti's sonnets seem to me now — a vast mysterious place full of glades and birds, wildflowers and bracken; beyond that again, not on our property I think, was a nut-wood intersected by green paths one exactly like the other, in which I never strayed far from my elders for fear of getting lost. I was always haunted with this particular terror, and once, when separated for one second from my family in the midst of a seething fire-work crush at the Crystal Palace, started such appalling yells of "I shall never see my dear papa and mama again!" that the crowd instantly divided to enable my father's hand once more to grasp mine.

Fringed with disreputable-looking willows was a duck pond, on which we used to put forth in wine-boxes and tubs; and hard by an old elm tree, in which Alice, Johnny, and a friend of his built one of the many descendants of the Tree House in the *Swiss Family Robinson*. It had a floor, and heaps of shelves and hooks, and we were allowed to have tea up there when we had been very good. As milk warm from the cow figured among our treats, I pretended to love it, but really was rather nauseated, and privately thought milk-

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ing an improper sight. It seemed cruel, too, to maul the poor cows like that, and when the gruff cowman said they liked it, he was not believed.

I have two special farmyard recollections, one being the occasion on which young Maunsell B—, a school friend of Johnny's who spent most of his holidays with us and considered himself engaged to Mary — promised me sixpence if I would ride a slim black pig called Fairylight round the yard. For some reason or other we were dressed in clean, open-work, starched frocks, and when, after being shot off on to the manure heap, I was dragged into my father's study by our infuriated nurse, it was easy to see he could hardly keep his countenance. The other incident was my bribing the cowman (again with sixpence) to let me see a pig killed — conduct which deeply shocked and horrified Johnny, who considered such sights a male privilege. The terrific scolding that followed was unnecessary, since for months afterwards I turned green whenever I heard a pig squealing. At last even the nurse pitied me and would say: "Bless your heart, he's only squealing for his dinner," which I hope was true. Otherwise I am quite sure I was not a cruel little girl, except perhaps later on in the donkey days, when dreadful things were done with the butt end of a whip; but anyone who has had to do with donkeys will make allowances.

Among other memories such as these, to which one can put no exact date, certain only that they root in the earliest days of one's childhood, is the great occasion when the house caught fire. A modest blaze, caused by the light-hearted way builders used to work beams into kitchen chimneys, it was soon got under; but I remember the increasing smell of charred wood, and the wild excitement when the floor of our big cupboard was found to be smouldering, the nursery being above the kitchen. For days carpenters were in the house putting down new boards, and when the nurse's foot went through the ceiling below, the cook, whose imagination no doubt was running on workmen's tools, declared she had taken it for "a great big 'ammer." Whereupon everyone in the house began staring at nurse's feet, and there were allusions to "the blacks," whose legs are notoriously planted half-way between heel and toe.

Another vivid recollection is Danson Park, inhabited by a cross, gruff-voiced old uncle, husband of Papa's eldest sister, who did not

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like children. As usual in those days there were a bakehouse and dairies, and we were allowed to skim a cupful of cream from any bowl we liked. But the bakehouse was the great attraction, for there we used to knead little dough mice, with currants for eyes, poking them ourselves into the oven to take home by and by. I remember that as a rule they were either stodgy and grey, or very white and requiring to be broken up with chisel and hammer. There seemed to be no medium. But among the many pleasanter greedy memories I have stored up in my life, and hope yet to store, is the exquisite flavour of some muddy perch which were caught by us one afternoon in a stream that ran through beautiful Footscray Place and were cooked for supper as a very special treat.

Another incident stands out among all the rest, uncanny, inexplicable, appealing to the agitated imaginativeness nearly all children possess, though what becomes of it later on one cannot think — an emotion no one handles more supremely than German writers such as Hoffmann and his contemporaries. Again the scene is at Footscray Place, in front of a great jar full of what I now fancy must have been ears of bearded Egyptian wheat, and which we were told came out of a mummy's coffin. But according to my conviction they were thousand-year-old insects, not really dead but in a state of suspended animation; for when placed in a soup-plate with a little water at the bottom they presently began to swell, stretch out their legs, and turn slow somersaults. No one knows what nightmares followed that particular treat.

Finally there is one more memory, dateless, but imperishable, because I was never allowed to hear the end of it — an occasion on which all unconsciously a life's philosophy was formulated. Once Grandmama helped me to some pudding, and seeing I did not touch it exclaimed: "Why, I thought that was your favourite pudding!" My answer was: "Yes, but this is so little I can't eat it."

I think on the whole we were a naughty and very quarrelsome crew. My father once wrote and pinned on the wall: "If you have nothing pleasant to say *hold your tongue*"; an adage which, though excellent as a receipt for getting on in society, was unpopular in a nursery such as ours, for words lead to blows and we happened to love fighting. There was one terrific battle between Mary and my-

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self in the course of which I threw a knife that wounded her chin, to which she responded with a fork that hung for a moment just below my eye, Johnny having in the meantime crawled under the table.

Then again there was a loft in which queer old swords and pistols looted by my father in his Indian campaigns were stored away, together with hideous discarded family portraits, to stab which was of course irresistible. But the strange thing is that we often fought with these weapons among ourselves, not infrequently in anger, and yet did each other no serious damage. It was in the loft that our first smoking essays took place. Some people say this is an acquired taste; if so someone acquired mine for me before I was born, for we often smoked bits of my father's broken canes, as well as tea rolled inside brown paper, and I can truthfully say the thing came as naturally to me as eating pear-drops, nor was I ever the worse for it.

Of course we merited and came in for a good deal of punishment, including having our ears boxed, which in those days was not considered dangerous, and my mother's dramatic instinct came out strongly in her technique as ear-boxer. With lips tightly shut she would whip out her hand, hold it close to one's nose, palm upwards, for quite a long time, as much as to say: "Look at this! You'll feel it presently"; and then — smack!

I think I am the only one of the six Miss Smyths who has ever been really thrashed; the crime was stealing some barley sugar and, though caught in the very act, persistently denying the theft. Thereupon my father beat me with one of Grandmama's knitting needles, a thing about two and a half feet long with an ivory knob at one end. He was the least cruel of men, and opponents of corporal punishment will say its brutalizing effect is proved by the fact that when I howled he merely said: "The more noise you make the harder I'll hit you." Hit hard he did, for a fortnight later, when I joined Alice, who had been away all this time at an aunt's, she noticed strange marks on my person while bathing me, and was informed by me that it came from sitting on my crinoline.

Even in after years my mother could not bear to think about that thrashing. All I can say is it left no wound in my memory as did snubs, and was the only punishment that ever had any effect — for I dreaded being hurt. Indeed, to run the risk of ordinary

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pains and penalties, and make the best of it when overtaken by them, was quite part of our scheme, and I am glad to know that some of our happy thoughts when under punishment extorted unwilling admiration even from our chastisers.

For instance one day, when Mary and I knew that incarceration in an empty room at the top of the house would surely be our lot, we seized as many books as we could lay hold of and stuffed them into our drawers, which buttoned up at the sides. I remember the agony of feeling them slip lower and lower as we were herded upstairs, and how finally, just as the key was turned on us, down they came in an avalanche. On another occasion we were locked up in Papa's dressing-room and the shutters were barred; but there was light enough to ransack his wardrobe and construct, with the aid of pillows and bolster, a complete effigy of him lying on his back on the floor in full hunting costume. And as finishing touch the pin-cushion, with an inscription pricked out in pins, "For dear Papa," was laid on the effigy's breast. If that didn't melt them I really don't know what would, but as a matter of fact an indiscreet word let drop now and again by visitors made us suspect that a more lenient view of our crimes obtained than might have been supposed. Anyhow I know we were considered very quaint and amusing children, and, as happens in most families, were alternately encouraged by guests to chatter and snubbed by our parents for being forward.

The two great indoor occupations were boat-building and a game called "grandeurs" — really dressing up and acting. It took its name from a sack thus labelled, in which were stowed away remnants of my mother's old ball dresses, feathers, the huge bunches of artificial grapes then in fashion, and gold braid from my father's uniforms — our theatrical wardrobe of course. The word "grandeurs" had probably been used in fun by Mother, who was brought up in France, but we pronounced it in broad English "granndjers." To this day the succession of small cardboard boxes in which are packed the modest store of ornaments I take about with me are inscribed "grandeurs," and the smart housemaids in country houses who lay out the contents of my dressing-table may well be astonished at this designation.

Like all children we of course "acted" our parents' friends, and one of Johnny's and my most admired productions was a visit from

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our neighbours the Sydneys. Lord Sydney, then Lord Chamberlain, was the most pompous old gentleman I have ever seen, exactly like "the Earl" in melodrama, with his curled grey whiskers and gold *pince-nez*. He had a way of holding out two fingers to Johnny and saying "How do boy" which was done justice to by his personator. Lady Sydney was rather a dear, I used to think, and by crinkling up my nose, looking down it, and complaining of the east wind, I was considered not only to resemble her as much as a child of seven can resemble a woman of forty-five or fifty, but to give a satisfactory rendering of what we were told was the Paget manner. I particularly remember the Sydneys, of course, because they were our local grandees — also because their extreme friendliness to my parents caused some heartburning to other less favoured neighbours.

When we were engaged in boat-building, a type of conversation prevailed — result of absorption in our job combined with habitual garrulousness — which we ourselves recognized as idiotic and called "ship conversations." This was the sort of thing: "I say!" "What?" (*Pause.*) "I say!" "Well?" "D'you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to make a rudder." (*Long pause.*) "What for?" "D'you mean to say you don't know what a rudder's for?" "Of course I know what a rudder's for." (*Pause.*) "Wha-a-at?" "Of course I know what it's for." (*Long pause.*) "Then why did you ask?" "Ask what?" "Why I was going to make one." "I didn't ask why you were." "Oh, what a cracker! Mary, didn't she ask me why I was making a rudder?" — and so on by the hour. Needless to say, our ships were raced on the pond and always turned turtle.

The final scene in each day's drama was going down to dessert in starched, richly beribboned frocks, our hair well crimped; and sometimes as a great treat a teaspoonful of sherry would be added to our tumbler of water. In later years Nina was once heard confiding to her nurse that the one wine she could not bear was sherry and water.

It will surprise no one to learn that I didn't care much for dolls, but strange to say Mary was in the same class. Of course we had dolls, but they spent most of their time in strict quarantine, it being our habit to inflict on them long illnesses supposed to be infectious and yet to require no nursing. The fact that they bored

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us was too revolutionary to be faced, so we had to find some plausible reason for ridding ourselves of their hated company. The only difficulty was to invent enough new diseases. Up to the time I am thinking of, the family had been immune from measles, but not so the dolls, and when, at our wits' end, we decided to give them a second bout, Johnny objected that no one ever had measles twice — and his word carried weight. Shortly afterwards the whole household was down with it, including my mother, who became exceedingly ill, but I remember the incident mainly because of my joy that for once the great Johnny had been wrong, my mother having had measles when a child.

As I am on the theme of epidemics which of us can ever forget the whooping-cough visitation, how we wandered about whooping for weeks and weeks, armed with dreadful little jampots that were hidden under sofas when visitors came, and inadvertently kicked over. After that the one thing Mary drew the line at was the dolls having whooping-cough.

She was far the more ladylike child of the two. Besides a strong regard for appearances she had presence of mind of the sort the French call *à plomb*, and would come with flying colours out of situations that, to use an admirable slang expression, floored me; in fact the reproach so often levelled in the nursery of making a spectacle of oneself could seldom be addressed to her with justice. But one day circumstances were too strong for her. Travelling backwards in a shut carriage always made us both feel sick, and once at a review at Woolwich, when we were perched on the top of the brougham to get a good view, poor Mary was overcome before the whole of Her Majesty's forces. It was some time before I let her hear the last of that.

Those were of course the days of croquet, but I cannot remember our playing that game at children's parties. I hated outdoor parties, because one was dressed up at an unseasonable hour and had to behave like a little lady; also, as happened later in the long struggle for the vote, the males, who were unable to do without us in private life, cold-shouldered us in public, and it may be imagined how a tomboy would resent this.

To go to the seaside in the summer was part of our ritual. London was even then a big place, and then, as now, poured its drains

into the Thames; nevertheless Southend, a place no modern hygienic mama would dream of sending children to, was generally our bourne. There and at Broadstairs my life-long passion for the sea awoke; the sea, that is, as viewed from the land. As for the drains, my father had sturdy, old-world views on such subjects, and often said there was nothing harmful about "a good open stink."

It is curious to think how much less fuss was made in those days about children's ailments and accidents. For instance one day, when our parents, who were away on a visit, were expected home, I made some toffee, but forgot the first rule of all, to butter the plate, consequently the mess stuck to it. I leant my whole weight on the knife, holding the plate firmly, the toffee came away, and I cut my left thumb literally to the bone. It ought to have been a case of lockjaw. I held it in a jug of water and bandaged it with rags, and when the parents arrived all my mother said was: "That comes of wanting two treats in one day" (the first treat being their return home). The result of these Spartan methods is that all my life I have only just been able to span an octave with my left hand.

At this stage of my existence I stood in great awe of my father, but adored my mother, and remember her dazzling apparitions at our bedside when she would come to kiss us goodnight before starting for an evening party. I often lay sleepless and weeping at the thought of her one day growing old and less beautiful. Besides this, wild passions for girls and women a great deal older than myself made up a large part of my emotional life, and it was my habit to increase the anguish of love by fancying its object was prey to some terrible disease that would shortly snatch her from me. Whether this was simply morbidity, or a precocious intuition of a truth insisted on by poets all down literature — from Jonathan and David to Tristan and Isolde — that Love and Death are twins, I do not know, but anyhow I was not to be put off by glaring evidence of robust health. I loved for instance Ellinor B., a stout young lady who rode to hounds, was a great toxophilite as they were called in those days, led the singing in church in a stentorian voice, and was altogether as bouncing a specimen of healthy young womanhood as could be met with. Persuaded nevertheless that this strong-growing flower was doomed to fade shortly, I one day asked Maunsell if he did not think she was dying of consumption, and shall never forget

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my distress when he answered with a loud guffaw: "Consumption? Yes, I should think she *may* die of consumption, but not the kind you mean!"

At Sidcup too I learned that the accents of tragic passion have as poor a chance of being understood in the nursery as elsewhere. I worshipped my lovely cousin Louie, and one day when she took me on her lap and cuddled me, I murmured, burying my face in her ample bosom: "I wish I could die!" — whereupon the nurse exclaimed: "Why, Miss Ethel, what ever makes you say such a thing? *I thought you were so fond of your cousin!*" People's love-affairs, in so far as I could get to hear about them, always arrested my attention, and at a time when I was too young to know either the artist's passion or personal ambition, love seemed to me the only thing that mattered; but nothing less than Keats's unquenchable flame of course. One day a letter from an admirer of Louie's was indiscreetly read out in my presence (she was then a young widow) and I was much puzzled by the phrase: "Oh, for one hour of your love!" Of what use, I said to myself, could one hour be to anyone? but for once asked no questions.

Most of my early recollections are connected with turbulent love agonies (my own, I mean) or equally tragic humiliations, such as when one's drawers came off at children's parties — a trouble little girls are born to as the sparks fly upward; or again when I handed a penny to the Post Office clerk, halfpenny postage being unknown in those days, and guessed from his manner of re-echoing my demand for "a pennyworth of stamps" that I had said something ridiculous. From one of these trials years — alas! — set us free; but the other — an occasional sense of having made a fool of oneself — will be with some of us to the end.

CHAPTER III. . . . to 1867

RELATIONS played a great part in our lives. Some are remembered because of one single incident connected with them; for instance there was a brother of my father's whom we disliked, chiefly, I really believe, because waking up one night and suddenly feeling the ivory bell-handle bob on his bald head, he was so terrified that he began bellowing like a bull (or as Violet once said when a child, like a bull in a basin) and roused the whole household. Or again there was an aunt of my mother's, a shrewd old maid with a twinkling eye — one of the few relations who liked me — whom I remember because of two remarks she made to Johnny. Once when he was fidgeting she exclaimed: "I really believe you must be growing a tail!" which I found intensely funny though rather risky; and on another occasion, when he was being a little censorious, she suddenly said: "Do you know, Johnny, a man once made a huge fortune by minding his own business." It took me some time to understand the point of this remark, but once grasped, I said to myself: "There's one for Master Johnny!"

But a relation who really shared our life was a clergyman cousin, Hugo J. He lived in the next parish, always ate his Sunday dinner with us, adored our parents, and I really think spent all his spare time — and he was a busy zealous priest — amusing us children. His draughtsmanship was quite above the average, and besides a celebrated donkey-cart picture of which I shall speak later, we still possess a water-colour sketch by him of the Bengal Horse Artillery charging a native regiment. A young officer in spectacles, evidently my father, leads the charge, and is slashing off a Sepoy's head in his stride. We used to ask Papa with awe if this really happened, but he only chuckled behind his *Times*, and we never got a definite reply.

Kind as he was to us, in those days I did not love Hugo and I don't think he liked me. His was the type of mind that delights in scoring off people and humbling the pride of conceited little girls; also he had a habit I have always resented of saying rather unpleasant things in a laughing way. All the same, what with his inexhaustible talent for inventing agitating games, drawing "bogies,"

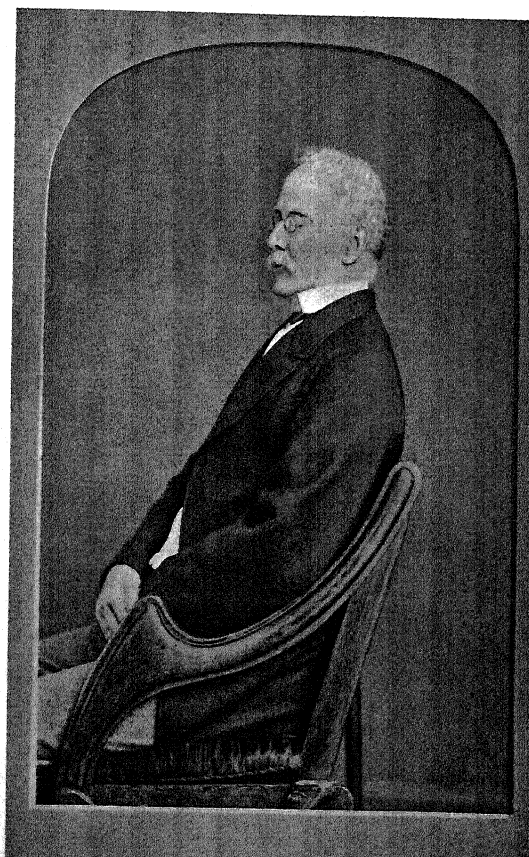
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and immortalizing our adventures in pen-and-ink sketches, he certainly contributed immensely to our happiness, and the rest of the family were devoted to him.

He it was who started in us the craze of illustrating our correspondence, which brings me to yet another cousin, to whom, when he went to India, Mary and I wrote adoring letters by every mail. Postage to India was a shilling in those days, and my effusions were long and profusely illustrated. After months of correspondence our cousin at last wrote: "I love your letters more and more, and don't a bit mind their having only a penny stamp on them." I rather think each letter must have cost him about five shillings and he was far from well off.

Another relation was a niece of my father's whose husband was quartered at Woolwich, and though he was a delightful person with children, I chiefly remember our being once sent over alone in the brougham to lunch with them, on which occasion the doors were firmly tied up with rope and the window-sashes plugged with cork, so that by no possibility could we get out. Sometimes I think we were as little fussed about as children could desire, but recollections such as this seem to point the other way. The truth is probably that our parents inclined to give us plenty of rope; that we then took too much; that aunts and cousins presently stepped in with criticisms and expostulations, whereupon the rope was for a while drawn very tight, then relaxed again, and so on. I have seen this happen in many families; the children know all about it and put black marks against certain names which it takes years and years to obliterate.

An infrequent and eagerly looked-for guest was my father's cousin and contemporary Colonel O'H., an Irishman whose tremendous brogue gave extra point to his tremendous language. A former Duchess of Atholl once remarked: "It is a pity *swearing* has gone out of fashion, it was such an offset to conversation," and certainly our cousin did his best to keep that fashion alive. His wife, who also had a strong but very pretty brogue, was of the gentle type such men generally prefer, his daughter graceful, languid, humorous, and very wide awake in a quiet way. Everything connected with him was seen through the usual Irish spectacles; his avenue was the finest in Ireland, his daughter had a prettier seat on horse-



Major-General J. H. Smyth, C.B.
(The Author's Father, aged about seventy)

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back than any other girl in Ireland, her mare was the best-bred animal in Ireland, and so on. What most astonished us was his jovial freedom with our parents, and when he pressed his favourite beverage, "whisky dilooted with sherry," on my father, thundering out: "What? too strong for a seasoned old cask like you, John? Aren't ye ashamed, ye ould hypocrite!" we thought the skies would fall. But my father merely laughed and took it as a matter of course.

Most of this old gentleman's remarks were deliberately intended to startle and cover his interlocutor with confusion, but his periods were so rounded, and the whole thing put through with such a swing, that it was impossible to take offence. On one occasion he replied to our very genteel governess, who had mincingly enquired if he had not found it very cold in church: "Ah, ye sacrilegious wretch! If your religion doesn't warm ye, Satan will" — a very perfectly constructed phrase, shot out as always with the force of a bullet from a gun. In short he impressed me more than all the rest of our relations put together.

My parents were very hospitable, and certain friends were constant guests, including many old Indians whose names I have since met in print, such as Sir Alfred Light, a tremendous buck, middle-aged, with stays and dyed waxed moustaches, said to have been a great lady-killer; Sir Harry Tombs, Sir Herbert and Lady Edwardes, and others. I bitterly regret not having cross-questioned my father more persistently about India and the Mutiny. Nowadays fresh records of that most horrible of all our many wars are constantly appearing, and a queer feeling rises in my heart when I come across certain names and remember I looked with a child's indifferent eyes on the faces of those who bore them.

But one amazing couple of old Indians who, being relations, often came to Sidcup, and whose names figure in no records whatever, were the A.'s. She was of the great Z clan, with a huge oblong face the colour of brick dust, and, but for her tow wig, was the image of her celebrated but not beautiful brother Lord Z. We were not fond of her, but adopted her name for a frequent childish complaint, "*scruatum internum*," with enthusiasm. Colonel A., a pale insignificant man, with a sad, drooping, white moustache and folds of yellow parchment skin hanging about his jowl, was the least military-looking figure conceivable; and I have since learned that

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his career had been far from brilliant. Prototype of all hen-pecked husbands, he was ordered to bed, ordered out of the room, ordered to talk or be silent as the case might be, and ordered out riding on a chestnut horse of his, called Alma, that ambled, and was supposed to be the only animal he could sit on without falling off. As he rode he gently flailed the horse's flank with a gold-headed bamboo cane, which, being hollow, did no harm but produced an immense noise; you heard him coming nearly a mile off. He was put on diet by his wife, and sometimes, she being at the other end of the table, would trifle with the unpalatable messes she insisted on having prepared for him; but presently the tow wig would bend forward across all intervening obstacles, and a gruff, imperative voice uttered the startling words: "Cow, cow," which is the Hindustani for "eat."

This reminds me that when they began discussing matters not fit for our ears, one of our parents, generally Papa, would suddenly say something that sounded like "Barba loaka sarmnay," which means "Remember the children," and continue the conversation in Hindustani, much to our admiration. It seemed strange that Papa, who couldn't speak a word of French or German, should be so glib in this heathen jargon, but as he had spent about thirty years of his life in India it was not surprising. My mother, who was with him there about a third of that time, picked up her Hindustani, as most women did in those days, from the servants, the usual number of which in a small household was thirty or forty; according to my father her command of the language was extensive but ungrammatical.

I think we were fairly well off in the early Sidcup days, especially after the death of my maternal grandmother, whose only surviving child Mother was, and who bequeathed to her, among other things, the very fine jewels and lace of which there will be dramatic mention presently.

"Bonnemaman" as she was known to us in contradistinction to our very English "Grandmama," and whose name I sometimes remember with a start was once Mrs. Struth, lived in Paris, and was a mysterious personality. I never saw her myself, but there were legends of her having taken to her bed soon after she was forty,

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partly because of rheumatism, partly from "foreign" indolence, and chiefly in order to receive innumerable doctors in becoming caps and bed-jackets. We gathered that she was considered worldly and gifted, also that like all Straceys she had great musical talent, and years afterwards it thrilled me to learn she had known Chopin intimately. They said she had been extremely handsome — as we could judge for ourselves when her portrait by Jonquière came into my mother's possession — and one realized vaguely that an unfortunate second marriage had taken place, it being understood that the initials on the mother-of-pearl counters we played round games with must not be alluded to because they were those of Mr. Reece, the second husband. Louie once told us that when a child she had been taken to see her in Paris, and was sent out on to the balcony with a small French boy, who at once began spitting on the heads of passers-by; when suddenly beautiful "Aunt Emma" shot out and boxed his ears as Louie never saw ears boxed before or since. Later she remembers an awe-inspiring peep of her ill in bed, all white lace and cherry-coloured ribbons; the room was darkened and one went on tiptoe. I recollected these details because anything like a mystery rouses a child's interest.

One morning, some time in the sixties, a telegram was handed to my mother under the acacia tree; she fainted, and we learned that Bonnemaman was dead. After that I forgot all about her, till, again during the genealogical craze, I came upon some rather curious correspondence.

If she, as is evident, was imprudent in money matters, Mr. Reece was nothing better than an adventurer, but she adored him and quarrelled with her relations on his account. These must have been odious to a degree, for in one rather piteous letter she says it really was *not* kind of Aunt So-and-So to put about in England that she had large cupboards built in her bedroom in order to conceal lovers; an inspection of the apartment, she adds, would show that the only cupboard large enough "for such a wicked purpose" is in the dining-room. There is much discussion about raising money between her and a blunt, kindly man of the name of Guthrie, possibly a trustee and I think a radical, who writes a beautiful hand. One of his letters shows what people who foolishly preferred foreign countries to England had to put up with in those days, and is also so full of

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character and genuine good feeling that I cannot refrain from giving it.

September 10, 1837.

Pardon, my dear friend, for the coarse terms in which it appears I addressed you in my last letter; the line of my pursuits, and my habits altogether, require me rather to speak the facts as they rise to my mind, and I believe I study far too little the conveying my thoughts with the courtesy due to the party addressed. I must go abroad by and by to study the Embroidery of Language and Sentiment, but in the meanwhile I cannot honestly retract a word of what I previously expressed. I disapproved decidedly of your having to borrow from *any* man; the fact itself is sufficient, I think, to prove Indiscretion. As to the Respectability I shall say nothing; you would not have the contest in your own bosom were you not conscious of your own Wrong.

You speak more to the point, in my view, when you hold cheap your own personal Sacrifices, if by any such you could redeem your independence. Is this a bit-by-bit Tory-like feeling, or can you come it strong like a radical reformer?

You say that not one of your wealthy kindred can or will help you. Then help yourself. Accept the situation offered to Madame Guithart, put Nina ¹ to school with Amy Loo at Miss Coultons. I will with pleasure find the money for her charges. Take Tiny with you to Jersey and your family is provided for. In twelve months you will again be a Person of Fortune, and you will have done nothing you need be otherwise than proud of. Nina would be greatly improved in health and education. For I hold that French Education, however elegant and agreeable it may be, wants the honesty, the principle, the English feeling which gives an English woman a Caste and Superiority over the women of all other countries, and which your family run the risk of losing from their long residence in France in Foreign Society.

My suggestion has nothing but common sense to recommend it. The idea of such a plan will horrify and humiliate the proud feelings of all your family, but still in Moral Honesty it is unimpeachable, and in all its Consequences would, after 12 months, be beneficial to you and yours. Most particularly to Nina, in whose welfare I feel a very warm interest, and not less in your own, my good Lady, though we may have different ways of proving it. I do not impeach your Code, only I claim a right to think for myself; it is not worth your while quarrelling with me because

¹ My mother.

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we may differ. You can put my letter in the Fire and thus will end this my d——d friendly interference.

Believe me always yours very truly,

D. CHARLES GUTHRIE.

To this letter was added a very unmitigated postscript addressed to the husband, in the course of which the writer says:

If the unkindness of your own family and her friends should compel you to mount a 3 legged stool, or even to break stones for a season, I should say that if you thereby redeem your Freedom and Independence you will be comparatively a proud and happy man, and every sensible person would applaud your firmness and decision of character.

Finally he declines an offer of hospitality in terms which suggest that his correspondent had been insane enough to try to borrow money of the writer: "Otherwise it has always been a pleasure to give or receive kindness of your wife's family as our forefathers mutually delighted to do by each other — and I believe neither owed the other anything on the score."

I found too an enchanting letter to her from a French friend who seems to have lent Mr. Reece three thousand francs on interest. No doubt this is the affair alluded to by Mr. Guthrie, and one finds a clue to the personal sacrifices poor Bonnemaman was prepared to make in the following extract:

Quant au sacrifice que vous voulez faire pour satisfaire à cette dette, je ne l'accepte et ne l'accepterai jamais dans la forme que vous me proposez. Non, mon estimable amie, ce n'est pas moi qui vous dépouillerai de ces cachemirs et de ces bijoux *que vous aimez bien*, me dites-vous. Je ne me donnerai jamais le honteux relief de vous avoir privé de ce qui vous est agréable; d'autant plus que ce n'est pas moi qui vous aurais réduit à une si fâcheuse situation.

To make up for this dig at the husband he speaks of happy days spent in their society:

. . . grâce à votre esprit, vos talents, et ce caractère si aimable et rare que vous savez porter dans toutes les relations d'un commerce si délicieux. Moi je ne les oublie pas, et il feront encore les délices de mes vieux jours, malgré tous les regrets qu'ils me causeront. Mais, vous le savez, il

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est des peines, des chagrins, qui ont encore de la douceur, et j'en trouverai une grande, surtout, dans l'assurance que j'ai d'être toujours digne de votre amitié. . . . *Adieu! Adieu!* — vous rappelez-vous? C'était votre manière de prendre congé! . . .

Then there is another man friend who writes from Calabria and is called Paris — a name of which no doubt, if they ever heard it, the family made capital. This letter presents the husband in quite a new light, as one "whose sound comprehensive understanding, whose deep and extensive knowledge of men and things, ought to make him eminent in the career of letters he now proposes to take up." Written in the April before the Guthrie correspondence, I imagine optimistic Bonnemaman saw wealth flowing towards them through literary channels; the cashmere shawls and jewels were not yet in jeopardy. In this letter a reproach is levelled against her which delights me: "I am sure you overrate other women, judging by yourself," and elsewhere she is told that her intimacy with a certain Madame de Lyris, elderly and far from elegant, though, the writer is convinced, generous and noble-minded at bottom, speaks volumes for the goodness of her heart. "Young and beautiful as you are yourself, you know how to appreciate *parfum* though the vase be old-fashioned and unbeautiful." Paris seems to have received a poem from his correspondent at a critical moment which, suddenly found among his papers, makes him suddenly *see* her — "a delusion that faded away with grief."

Given the ridiculous notions that prevailed even in my youth on the subject of "French immorality," one can imagine the construction put by the family on these friendships, yet I feel convinced from internal evidence that there was nothing wrong.

Tied up with these and other letters — mostly disagreeable ones from near relations — and drafts of her replies, which though dignified are rather funny, I found countless conundrums, charades, and Elegant Extracts in French, English, and Italian, copied out in her own handwriting. One of her most stately drafts concerns the disobligingness of her brother-in-law Sir Henry Durrant, who could not find the time to write out a "quadrille" which had taken her fancy while staying with him in Norfolk; and on the other side of a still more uncompromising draft are some cantering verses with

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the refrain: "And I am the Gipsy King." I do not know whether she or my mother is responsible for this odd intermarriage of documents. As "Paris" remarks: "Nina promises to take after you," and it is very like both of them.

Bonnemaman seems to have followed her candid friend Guthrie's advice and retired to Jersey for a while, taking both children with her, but after the death of the youngest little girl the family insisted on exporting an English governess, in order that my mother might have "some chance of being brought up like an English young lady." Finally the stepfather became so impossible that there was a judicial separation, but much to her relations' disgust Bonnemaman declined to come home and face "I told you so," and lived and died in France. She was considered to have lost caste by her second marriage, and as separations were looked upon as disgraceful in those days, no matter where the fault lay, her situation amply accounts for her having been thus shrouded in mystery. Indeed, Alice remembers that some time after her death, my mother, ever unconventional, having casually remarked: "I wonder if my stepfather is alive," Papa looked greatly annoyed at such a subject being mentioned before the child.

Such was the woman who was hushed up before her grandchildren as a sort of family disgrace! After reading these letters, especially hers to my mother, I have come to the conclusion that poor Bonnemaman, gifted, warm-hearted, impulsive, and thoroughly "injudicious," would have been my favourite relation.

Not long after her death came the tragedy of all old Indians, the failure of the Agra Bank, and my father lost most of his savings; thus in early days I knew the chill cast on a cheerful household by financial worries. Either then or earlier he made heavy sacrifices to ensure each daughter that should remain single forty pounds a year. As five out of the six married, I am the only one to profit by the arrangement, and the title under which I claim this pension is — "Bengal Military Orphan."

CHAPTER IV. *My Father*

My father, a fine example of what is fortunately a not uncommon type, was one of fourteen children, six of whom were alive when I was young. Tall, upright, strongly built, with the pleasant, open, very English countenance we see exaggerated in the portraits of Mr. Punch, he had a bearing equally suggestive of kindness and authority. Having to wear spectacles slightly interfered, to my mind, with his military appearance, but in his Horse Artillery uniform, with its masses of gold braid and shaggy busby, he was a fine, soldierly-looking man — and in all costumes the picture of a gentleman.

To give an idea how the England of those days flung her youth into the world to find their level, he went out to India at the age of fifteen, he and his brother having been presented with commissions in the Bengal Army by their uncle Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, and a year later was responsible for roads, transport, communications, law and order, life and death, in a district as big as Yorkshire. There is an anecdote connected with his later Indian period which exactly characterizes him — one for whom duty and obedience were paramount, but who was capable of transcending the letter of the law on occasion. During the Mutiny certain men of his battery who had joined the mutineers were caught and condemned to be hanged in their officer's presence. Their senior, a sergeant, the best native soldier he ever had under him, advanced, saluted, and said: "Sahib, you often told me I did my duty to your satisfaction; grant me one last favour, let me die by your own hand." "And by Jove," said my father, "though our orders were to humiliate the mutineers in every way, I did as he asked and hanged him myself."

When quite a young man he became what is well called a martyr to gout; not even a busy life and limitless sport, including boar-hunting (which he hated to hear called "pig-sticking"), could work off the floods of champagne that flowed in India, so to speak, on the top of my grandfather's hogsheads of port. But between the attacks, right up to the end of his life, his vitality and cheerfulness, and what he chiefly laid store by, his usefulness, were unimpaired.

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No man was ever more loved and respected. Single-hearted, shrewd, with great knowledge of the world, partly innate, partly acquired, the watchword of his life was duty, which he pronounced "dooty," and after leaving the Army he threw himself into county work and made his character felt. He often remarked: "If I had nothing to keep me busy outside the house what a nuisance I should be in it!" and was generally determined to wear out, not rust out. They always said he was first-rate on the Bench, but once he astonished his brother magistrates by sharply reprimanding a young policeman, who was boasting how he had hidden behind a hedge and caught a man riding a bicycle on the footpath. "Then you did very wrong," said my father, "to go sneaking about laying traps. You're there to prevent people breaking the law, not to hide and tempt them to break it!"

He combined with his idea of service a simple piety he did not speak of but which his whole life was founded on, and he never went to sleep without reading in one of the little books at his bedside.

He was a keen politician — Conservative of course — and Chairman of the County Conservative Union, but advanced in his ideas. Long before the days of Tariff Reform he was in favour of a tax on raw material, and even advocated the enfranchisement of women, a theory no one else in our world took seriously. I remember his pointing out that three-quarters of the land in the parish was owned by women, and that it was monstrous these should be denied the suffrage. True, I think he was convinced that propertied females would vote his own way, but the injustice and unwisdom of their being voteless was what preoccupied him; no one believed more firmly that fair play is the only thing that pays in the long run.

I remember once when I was a schoolgirl telling him I had asked Mr. Pursey, the cobbler, why all shoemakers are radicals, and had found his reply: "Well you see, miss, we has time to *think*," rather interesting. But Papa was not at all impressed and said he had never heard such infernal nonsense in his life. He was very tolerant by nature and disposed to hear both sides of a question; still, convictions are convictions, and one day, when he was well over seventy, he remarked confidentially: "I am getting an old man, but upon my word it is very difficult for me even now to believe a radical

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can be an honest man." He always took the chair at political meetings in the neighbourhood, and nine out of ten of his speeches used to end with an exordium to his hearers to "do your duty by your Queen, your country, and your God." We children, and I daresay our neighbours, used to look forward to this peroration with some amusement, yet it was uttered so simply and earnestly that it always ended by impressing even me afresh. Towards the end of his life modern ideas were beginning to undermine the respect automatically paid to the gentry, but no one protested at his habit, when chairman, of silencing objections or awkward questions by rattling his stick furiously on the table and declaring the motion carried unanimously. People just laughed and let "the General's" high-handed methods pass unchallenged, such was his overflowing geniality.

He was an unqualified admirer of the British Constitution, and though freer from snobbishness than anyone it is possible to conceive, had a delightful old-fashioned respect for Royalty; if in our haste we stuck a postage-stamp upside down he was seriously annoyed; "It is disrespectful to your Sovereign," he would say. For distinguished personalities he had the same quality of reverence. I remember an incident that amused me even then, when my sense of humour was immature. To his thinking, Gladstone was the Devil, and hearing that great man was coming to speak at Aldershot he remarked: "If I see the beast I shan't take any notice of him." We afterwards discovered he was by chance on the platform when Gladstone stepped out of the train. "And what did you do?" asked my mother. "Well," was the reply, "as a matter of fact I believe I raised my hat." All the same he was delighted when I evaded a suggestion from a daughter of Gladstone's, a neighbour, to come over one day and sing to him. Alas! young people are terribly earnest, and I never had another chance of seeing the G.O.M. at close quarters.

Between my father and me there was never strong sympathy; perhaps he recognized from the first a stubborn will that was eventually to triumph over his. I think too the artistic temperament was distasteful to him, though it was that of my mother, to whom he was deeply attached. Once when Bob was a child, Papa found him busy painting and flew into such a rage at a boy's indulging in such

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a pursuit that he swept the whole paraphernalia on to the floor, and Bob thought he was going to be cuffed.

Yet the odd thing was that in some ways he himself had artistic instincts; Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, and other poets of his youth he read aloud admirably, and I was always struck with the musical cadence in his voice when he came to certain sonorous phrases in family prayers. Again, no one had a keener enjoyment of the beauties of nature, but none of this helped him to see in me anything but the rebel I certainly was.

His excellent delivery of stately English prose came in well reading the Lessons in church, but he was not a reader gifted with presence of mind, and arriving at certain strong unvarnished statements in the Old Testament, usually bowdlerized or omitted, would cough and stumble and get into terrible trouble, much to the delight of the congregation. My mother often entreated him to look at the chapter quietly at home first, but this his pride forbade. His versions, too, of some of the crack-jaw Biblical names were sometimes remarkable, but there was a simplicity about him which carried off anything and everything. I can see him now, walking slowly up the aisle to the reading desk, sublimely ignorant of the fact that his frock coat was buttoned awry.

On another occasion, when, because of the heat, the church door stood open, the congregation breathlessly watched a new fox terrier of ours come up the aisle, its mind full of misgivings, and eventually with shyly wagging tail begin snuffing his ankles. He went on reading, gave a kick to the right, went on again, gave a kick to the left, and then said in furious and audible undertones: "Take the brute out, somebody." Which somebody did; but his anger at this incident lasted all day; it is the only time I remember him doing anything approaching sulking.

As years went on he got more and more gouty, sticking manfully to tasks other men would have abandoned long ago; but when the time came for giving in, he did so with perfect sweetness of temper. I used to think my mother rather cruel to him about his growing infirmities, but they understood each other very well and he did not resent it. There was an institution that on her birthday he should drive her out himself; but when it came to his being obliged to wind the reins round his weak, gouty wrists, she could not refrain

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from urging he should let the coachman take them. By this time his hands were so covered with big chalkstones that our old friend Sir Evelyn Wood said to shake hands with him was like exchanging greetings with a mailed knight, but to the end he persisted in carving chickens and ducks, however tough. My mother would protest her helping was more like dog's meat than anything else, to which he would reply: "Well: cut off what you don't want and send it back," but give up carving he would not.

His great expression for actions or theories he approved was "right and proper." For instance I remember one Ash Wednesday when my mother, who felt lazy, said she didn't think she'd go to church because it was so cold; driven from this position by his statistics concerning the thermometer, she added thoughtfully: ". . . and then I don't like the Commination Service." "You mayn't *like* it," he retorted, "but it's *right and proper*, and you ought to hear it." He adored it himself, waggling his head more and more approvingly as curse after curse was reeled off.

He certainly was choleric in the old-fashioned military "damn-your-eyes" style, and if a footman dropped anything would call out angrily, even at our grandest dinner parties: "God gave you two hands, you fool, and why the devil don't you use them?" — a strange reproof, for surely dishes cannot be handed round on that principle, but I liked the phrase and hope the footman did. One proceeding of his greatly delighted our tennis guests; if they stayed too long he would hide behind a big laurel bush near the court and ring the dinner bell violently by way of a hint; some would linger on purpose to provoke this demonstration.

When his own family fell under his displeasure, betrayed by the verbal unreadiness I referred to, and which excitement and anger greatly increased, he would mix up his parts of speech in the most fantastic manner. Once when Bob, then a child of five or six, was teasing the dog Kitty, Papa exclaimed in violent irritation: "Now, Kitty, if you make Bobby bark I'll brain the poker." Or again when a chance cab, after leaving someone at our house, agreed to take someone else to the station if not kept waiting, he bellowed up the stairs: "Come along: no last words; the cab may fly any moment." In my youth the wine was always locked up by the family after meals, and one of his best "*coq-à-l'âne*," as my mother, whose de-

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light they were, called them, was: "Now then, Bob, lick up the locker — well, I mean lick up the shutter." But it was in the tightly packed Sunday landau, a situation calculated to rasp nerves all round, that this mood would most often overtake him. I remember his saying to Nelly and Bob, who were grumbling at being squeezed to death: "Well, if you two infernally thin people can't sit five in a carriage I don't know who can," and as we drew up at the church door he added: "Now, Mama, you come first, so just get out of the window."

Some of the things he said in his public capacity used to leak out; how he advised the Bench to kill two stones with one bird, and informed a Committee that the pollution of the Blackwater, a filthy little local river, was mainly caused by the "vast quantity of vegetable marrows flowing down from the hills." But in private life he never beat his advice to the mama of a rheumatic daughter: "You ought to put her under a masher." Once started on the wrong path, his conversation would be on these lines for the rest of the day, and my mother would laugh till she cried.

In spite of his insinuating on occasion, as most elderly men do, that he had been anything but a milksop in his youth, I cannot think he was ever wild, but he certainly had a weakness for what he called "a bit of a scamp," and always maintained his best sub-alterns were in that category. We noticed, too, that he was more than indulgent to members of the other sex suspected of frailty; so much so that Mary, a particularly favourite married daughter, once said in fun: "I wonder what you'd do if I went off with some other man." Thereupon he became angrier than she had ever seen him, got up, stamped about the room, and finally went out into the garden in a fury, to reappear five minutes later, poke his head in at the door, and say with terrific emphasis: "I'd curse ye!" Then the door was slammed and he was not seen again for several hours. Such is the logic of the British paterfamilias.

As time went on, expenses increased, income diminished, and his children used to think he was rather optimistic and happy-go-lucky about his affairs. I now question if this was so; anyhow I remember being very much impressed — I was about twenty-one at the time — by the quiet good humour with which he said one day: "I'm not such an old fool as you all think."

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His one idea in later years was to rush his six almost portionless daughters into matrimony, and ship his only remaining boy, Bob, off to India; and with one solitary exception, myself, these plans were realized. During his last illness he insisted on the summary in the *Times* and the leading articles being read to him long after he was past following their drift attentively, and died the death of a good man at seventy-nine, having survived my mother three years. No better testimony to him exists than the simple words our young rector, Mr. Basset, who had worked with him in the parish as curate for many years, spoke in Frimley Church the Sunday after the funeral:

I cannot finish my sermon without referring to the loss we have sustained in this parish during the last few days. One who was well known to us all, one who was a constant attendant in this Church and read the Lessons here for us for many years, has finished his earthly life.

He had had a long and eventful career; his youth and early manhood were spent in troublous times. After many years of active work abroad he did not seek his well-earned leisure in retirement as many would have done, but retiring from the Army he at once took an active part in the welfare of the parish he had made his home. We all know the zeal and energy he showed as magistrate, as county councillor, as school manager, as a member of the various committees he served on — a zeal that those much younger than he often wondered at, admired, and almost envied.

Whatever he undertook he put his whole energy into it; he was never indifferent, he was always hopeful and enthusiastic. His opinion was ever listened to, but he was one of those men who are open to conviction. If he could help anyone in this parish or district his services were always freely given, and many can remember his kind help when advice was required or some wrong had to be righted.

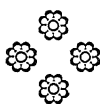
At public meetings he always spoke out his mind boldly and fearlessly. It seemed impossible for him to swerve from what he felt to be his duty, and from what he thought right, whatever might be the results. But as many of us know, his power lay in his personal character. In many ways it was unique. Hasty and quick in temperament, yet he was kind and considerate — beneath all a gentle and loving heart, almost a child's. If anger found a place there it soon passed into forgiveness; he could not cherish ill-feeling: it did not exist in his nature.

It was perhaps only a coincidence, but yet remarkable, that the last

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time he read the Lessons in this Church was at the close of the Christian year. The Lessons he read were the last in the Calendar. Some noticed then that age and work were telling on him, and that the very words, usually so well read by him, seemed to apply to him that soon the silver cord was to be loosed, the golden bowl broken, the pitcher broken at the fountain, the wheel broken at the cistern. . . .

He has now passed to his rest, a good Christian, a kind neighbour, a true friend, leaving behind him an example that we should do well to follow. — *St. Peter's, Frimley, April 8, 1894.*



CHAPTER V. *My Mother*

TO produce anything that gave a real idea of my mother's physiognomy was beyond the art of any known photographer; in the same way I half despair of describing, or rather making live again, her strange, difficult, but most lovable personality.

It was a case of baffled genius and injudicious bringing up combined. Whether Bonnemaman settled in Paris before, or only after, her second marriage I cannot say, but in spite of all the family said and did to prevent it my mother was educated in France, and at that time French was more her language than English. Children are always incurious about their parents' early days, and I never knew much about hers, but when a child myself I was deeply struck by her account of a vanished feature in the Champs-Élysées, typical of a gay simplicity no longer met with in this grave world.

It appears there was a path leading under a creeper-covered wire archway to a wooden hut in a shrubbery; from the archway swung a picture of a gentleman in green peg-top trousers, who was raising his hat to a lady in a pink skirt and a hat with drooping ostrich feathers, and remarking, according to the legend below:

*"Madame, il faut que je vous dise adieu,
Un devoir pressant m'appelle en certain lieu."*

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I also recall her telling us that in the revolution of '48 her mother's windows were barricaded with mattresses, and that on the wall of the house opposite there was a great splash of blood. Some years previously, owing to the unsatisfactory stepfather and other reasons, it had been settled that she should live at Rackheath, near Norwich, the home of her childless uncle, Sir Edward Stracey, and I gather this very handsome "frenchified" girl, who sang exquisitely, was looked upon as a dangerous interloper by less brilliant relations.

At that time my grandfather Smyth was Director of the Norwich Branch of the Bank of England, and thus it came that she met my father, who was home on leave. The wedding took place from Rackheath in 1848, and in acknowledgment of her offices as mistress of his house her uncle presented her with some very fine diamonds, which, when travelling, she persisted in carrying about on her person for safety; sometimes in a brown paper parcel, mysteriously tied on somewhere, sometimes sewn into a garment, but never in a dressing-case. These diamonds were not entailed, but the family had concluded they would go with the place, and one gathers that feeling ran high on the subject. This cannot have mattered much to her, for my father carried her off directly after their wedding to India, where she stayed, as I said, till shortly before the outbreak of the Mutiny.

Indian society was a small affair in those days, and what with her wit and gaiety, her almost southern beauty, and her music, she appears to have been a sort of queen out there. And judging by later years, when we wished he would put his foot down oftener, my father may possibly have been an over-indulgent husband.

She really was extraordinarily un-English, whether because she was educated in France or because her grandmother was a certain Mademoiselle de Lagarde — according to her portrait a wooden-faced young lady, with a huge miniature of a Protestant clergyman, her father no doubt, plastered on to her flat chest. The quick vivid gestures, for instance, were foreign, and I always thought were eyed by my father's sisters with some disfavour on that account; but, above all, her way of looking at things was utterly the reverse of what is called insular. I remember a little conversation between us, the finale of which caused one of my aunts to "bridle."



Mrs. J. H. Smyth
(*The Author's Mother, aged about fifty-five*)

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MOTHER (*heaping her plate with fried parsley*): I do love parsley!

ETHEL: Yes, fried, but not stuck raw in the middle of one's eggs and bacon.

MOTHER: Oh, I like it even as an ornament; it makes a dish look appetizing.

ETHEL (*sententiously*): Do you know I have come to the conclusion I don't like anything that isn't founded on common sense.

MOTHER (*impulsively*): And I infinitely prefer things that are *not* founded on common sense!

Against English conventionality she was, of course, in secret rebellion, but did her best to conform, as the following fact will surely prove. One of our annual excitements was the arrival of "Rouillard's box," a big case sent every Christmas by some old friends of Bonnemaman's, containing French books for children, pralines, and the celebrated barley sugar that cost me a caning. Père Rouillard was a sculptor, the chief pride of whose life was some bronze eagles he cast for the Tuileries, and which I suppose melted away in 1871. The books were illustrated of course, and when the scene was a domestic interior, a certain piece of crockery was always visible under the bed; this, in deference to English prejudices, my mother would transform with a broad-nibbed pen into a very unsymmetrical top hat, the improbability of the father of the family keeping his *haut de forme* in such a place troubling her not at all. I still have a fascinating picture book showing how a tall plump fairy taught *le petit Martin Landor* his music, aided by slimmer fairies whose heads are crotchets and quavers, and who perform athletic feats on rows of telegraph wires which turn out to be the staves. These lessons seem to have been given at night time by means of dreams and visions, and poor Martin is always either sitting up in bed staring with all his eyes, or being lifted clean out of it by the tall fairy. Thus on every other page is a detail brought into harmony with insular notions of decency by my amazing mother.

To describe her as she was when I remember her best — about the age of the detestable portrait given here, the only one extant — she was of middle height and was said to have had a beautiful figure in her youth; even in old age she was far from unshapely, and her arms and shoulders were still good to look upon. Her hair was once

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coal black, but I think she took early in life to bandeaux with curls over the forehead, which could be trusted not to turn grey. As her complexion was a warm brunette, slightly helped out by art, the black hair never looked discrepant, though I used to urge her to change it for the soft grey arrangement she admired so in Lady B—; in fact she used to complain I was a “regular *memento mori*.” Her eyes were her best feature, large, dark brown, melting eyes that Louie told me made them call her in her youth “the ox-eyed Venus” — the eyes of an artist, of someone with a loving heart — and even as an elderly woman she was considered very handsome, though she can never have been as handsome as her second daughter. But on the other hand it was one of the most expressive faces I have ever seen, and as her moods were many and her passions violent, he who ran might read much on that face.

If ever anyone was meant for social life it was she; I used to wonder at the change that came over her in society, more especially at her gracious hospitality, the perfection of good manners, in her own house. She adored entertaining, and though I used to reproach her in times of financial crisis for her “love of dress,” I was obliged to admit that, to use the charming French phrase, *elle portait bien la toilette*.

This even in later life; but how I wish I had known her when she was young! One day after her death Lady Sydney, whom we seldom saw in post-Sidcup days, met Alice in a shop and began talking of Mother, saying that when first they knew her, she and Lord Sydney had agreed that never had they come across such a brilliant being. When she dined with them, all other guests, whether English or foreign, became colourless; not because of her beauty and charm, her wit and vivacity, said Lady Sydney — these things one had met with in others to an equal degree — it was the unique personality. “Had your mother married a diplomat,” she added, “she would have been known and acclaimed all over Europe.” And having passed a good deal of my life abroad, I feel sure this is true.

She had a great gift for languages, and besides French and Hindustani knew German, Italian, and Spanish. Though she had visited none of the countries in which these languages are spoken except France and India, nor had any practice since her schoolroom days, when occasion demanded off she would start with fluency and idio-

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matic correctness, not to speak of an accent she owed to her musical ears.

For her strongest gift was undoubtedly music; she was in fact one of the most naturally musical people I have ever known; how deeply so I found out in after years when she came to Leipzig to see me and I watched her listening for the first time to a Beethoven symphony — watched her face softening, tightening, relaxing again as each beauty I specially counted on went home. Old friends maintained that when she was young her singing would have melted a stone, which I can well believe; all the warm, living qualities that made her so lovable must have got into it. When I knew her she had almost lost her voice, but enough remained to judge of its strangely moving timbre. Later on she loved to hear me sing, and it saddens me to think how seldom I gratified her when we were by ourselves; but I always was lazy about singing.

She read at sight very well and her playing of dance music was gorgeously rhythmic. I can see her now, *pince-nez* on nose, rapping out the beloved old "lancers," leading up to the curtsey, gluing us for ever so long to the floor, and sending us flying back to our places with incredible accent and go. One used to wonder if the children she played for noticed how different it was to the performance of their own mamas, but I greatly doubt it.

The same dramatic instinct made her cross-question us in what we thought the oddest way about incidents of our walks; "Tell me exactly what happened when you met; did you bow first or did he take off his hat first?" It all had to be visualized.

In those days, Heaven help me! I believed, as men told us, that feminine quickness of intelligence was a sign of superficiality, that it was far cleverer painfully to count up the fingers of each hand than to see at a glance that five and five make ten. I was therefore not as much impressed as I should be now by the extreme rapidity of her mental operations; but I soon noticed that though her judgment on impersonal matters was markedly sound, it was quite another thing when she herself was in question. Many of her children have inherited this very common weakness.

As I said, she had the warmest of hearts, and if violent in temper, was a generous forgiver and forgetter. But alas! capacity for affection and for suffering go hand in hand, especially if you have a vivid

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imagination and neither instincts nor habits to control it with, which was her case; indeed, whenever I think of her, David Copperfield's phrase about his "undisciplined heart" comes into my mind. No mother ever tormented herself more strangely. After saying goodnight to us, apparently in a happy frame of mind, perhaps she would not fall asleep at once; and then, as only too often happens with the hypersensitive, the passed day would shine upon her pillow, breeding many woes. Molehills transformed themselves into mountains of pain and despair, and at cockcrow, as it seemed to us, a piteous Odyssey would begin from one bedroom to another — we used to call it "morning calls" — and in each was recited a list of wrongs and cruelties suffered by her at our hands, slights, veiled rudenesses, or ridicule, the whole thing as often as not wholly imaginary. Explanations were seldom of any use, for even in peaceful moments her own point of view tended to obscure that of the other person — so much so that we often chaffed her about her style of relating a conversation: "So he said something or other, and I said '*not at all*, that's where you're quite wrong. . . .'"

Oh, those morning calls, and oh, the pitilessness of youth! . . . Speaking for myself, I fully realized the intense misery of her heart and sometimes met it sympathetically, but more often with impatience and anger. The whole thing was so unreasonable, besides which one wanted to go to sleep again.

For these and other reasons she was always to me a tragic figure. Alice, the favourite daughter, who knew her ten years before I did, in younger brighter days, thinks her nature was at bottom a happy one, but the self-tormenting strain must always have been there, waiting to assert itself when youth should wane. She certainly had a great sense of humour, and her laugh was wonderfully merry to the last; indeed, there were touches of lightness in her that sometimes astonished me. In the midst of a scene of despair, for instance, the arrival of a new bonnet from Paris, or a bunch of roses handed in at the window by the gardener, would transform her at once into the most cheerful of beings. Children are generally little prigs, and this trait, which I now find wholly charming and touching, used to affect me not quite agreeably.

When she was well and happy her talk sparkled with subtle turns

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and comments — *l'esprit français* in English garb — and nothing used to infuriate me more than the stolid faces of the rural swine for whose benefit these pearls were lavished, but she herself took it with smiling indifference. To see things wittily and express them felicitously came naturally to her, and she no more looked for applause than would a swallow circling and darting about over a meadow. All the same this lack of response must have depressed her unconsciously, for I know that my everlasting delight in the point of her conversation gave her immense pleasure.

In 1875 came the great sorrow of her life, the death of Johnny. This eldest son, of whom his masters predicted great things, had a slight hunting accident; his horse swerved jumping a fence and his knee caught in a bough. That was all; neither of them fell, but he went back to Westminster with a slight limp. Perhaps it was only a tiny displacement* that with the help of X-rays might have been located and easily put right; as it was, he was pulled about and tortured by surgeons, and taken to Wildbad with no result. Then came the slow agony of realizing that all schemes for his future must be abandoned; at last he took to a wheeled chair and died two and a half years after his accident.

Never in all this time did I hear my mother say an angry word to Johnny or even before him; he disliked scenes of all kinds, and however close on the brink of the tempest mood she might be, the slightest sign of distress from him would calm her in an instant. I used to wonder at this and might have guessed from it how she loved him and what his death meant to her. But as he had always been inclined to snub me I had no particular devotion for him myself, moreover was wrapped up as always in my own affairs. Thus it came that I never realized till after her own death that with him most of the sunshine went out of her life.

She was very fond of my father, and always maintained that at a march past no one saluted the flagstaff with a gesture more noble and graceful than he, at the head of the Artillery Brigade! But latterly I think she was a little jealous of his popularity. He appreciated good cooking and had one or two lady friends who loved to give the dear General lunch on his way to and from his county work. When possible he said nothing about these little treats, but

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sometimes the hostess would innocently let the cat out of the bag, and then — well, then I first began to realize that the most salient characteristic of the British male is not moral courage.

Apart from such occasional and definite twinges of jealousy, I daresay she may have envied him his simple sunny friendliness. As can be imagined if I have described her well, she had any amount of charm when she chose to exercise it, but not the quality I mean, which seldom goes with genius. Possibly she knew certain gifts are denied to the gifted, but if so would not have reconciled herself to the fact.

In later years guests who came to stay were not a success. The first day they were made more than welcome, but we knew the pace could not last, and presently, at mother's request, we were putting about legends calculated to relieve the situation. The usual one was bad news just received, which would cause them on their part to discover their presence was urgently required elsewhere. Visitors whom it was impossible, for some reason or other, to dislodge prematurely, must sometimes have felt they had outstayed their welcome, I fear; and even when visits were short she so wore herself out entertaining that after dinner only one idea was left, a furious longing for bed. But it was thought uncivil to make a move before ten thirty, our canonical hour, and this was always the last straw.

We used to watch with amusement the annual duel between her and one of her cousins, a shrewd pleasant woman with a flow of conversation I have seldom heard equalled, whose hour for retiring was unfortunately eleven. When the clock struck ten thirty my mother would say: "Ah! there's the clock," and begin spearing her crochet together; but the other considered it was "dear Nina's" place to yield to her guest's preferences, and the stream flowed smoothly on. It was very agreeable talk, but what is the use of being even brilliant if people want to go to bed? At length when the hour struck she would say in a mild surprised voice: "Is that eleven o'clock already?" and slowly roll up her own knitting. Never once did my mother carry her point, and I could not help suspecting a touch of malice in this phrase taken from one of her later letters to me: "Poor Georgiana still lingers on, but gets weaker every day — they say she talks *incessantly*, but is very seldom conscious."

As time went on, her hearing went more quickly down hill, and

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nothing makes greater demands on sanity of judgment than deafness. I am certain, too, that she was a classical case of what is nowadays called auto-intoxication, and that this, combined with internal weakness such as often afflicts mothers of large families, chiefly accounted for the uncertainty of her moods. After the girls were all married, Bob being in India, I lived at home, and frankly confess there was no house large enough to hold her and me. When away, even on a short visit, the loveliness of her so completely took possession that I used to say to myself: "This time when I go back there will be no more rows," but after a day or two the old story began again. Far be it from me to say it was all her fault; I was not nicknamed "the stormy petrel" for nothing; but I do think not even a saint could have lived in peace with her, if only because she had nothing definite to do and overmuch time for brooding.

In those days things were planned as a matter of course from the point of view of the male only, and no one ever gave a thought to the inequality of interest in the lives of men and women of her generation. My father was free to create for himself as many outside duties as he chose; but my mother, unaccustomed from youth upwards, and I think averse by nature, to country life; no walker, caring nothing for sport, which was not the fashion for girls in her day . . . what should she do, shut up through long autumns and winters in a country house not three hundred yards from the Basingstoke Canal and its mists? It was all very well as long as there were girls to take out, but I lived my own life of work and games, and was not much of a companion; meanwhile, for at least half the year, to go out calling in a shut carriage was supposed to be all the excitement a mama on the shelf could possibly need.

Such is the force of custom that I think she only realized by degrees what poor fun this was. I remember her complaining humorously yet rather bitterly of a way the coachman had, when in a bad temper, of suddenly lashing the horses and making them go on with a bound that nearly jerked her head off. Calling once on a very dull neighbour who lived four miles away, the carriage having by some misunderstanding gone off home, when she realized that there was no immediate escape from the intolerable boredom of her friend, she fainted dead away.

True she was physically indolent, and would sit for ages, her toes

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on the fender, her skirt turned back over an embroidered white petticoat, staring peacefully into the fire. At such times she would often draw eights in the air with one foot, and only a few years ago my friend Lady Ponsonby, who never saw her, suddenly said to me: "Do you know when you are thinking you draw eights in the air with your toe?" This trick of my mother's rather got on our nerves, and Nina, who never used elaborate language, but often fell asleep after dinner, even in those early days, once astonished us by drowsily murmuring: "It is taking no exercise that gives her that regrettable flexibility of the muscles." Nevertheless if it was a question of starting for her annual pilgrimages to Homburg or Wiesbaden, where the change of scene and the listening to music delighted her, or of going up to London, when fit, to the play or to concerts — in short, of doing anything that amused her — this indolence vanished like magic. Mercifully she was fond of reading, but you can't read all day, and hours upon hours must have hung like lead on her hands.

In a word, if bad health was one cause of trouble, another was boredom — boredom to death; yet no one tried harder, especially in later years, "to be good" as children say, and that is why I dare not dwell in thought on several incidents in our joint life, dreading the inevitable rush of useless remorse. In the winter of 1890-1 matters came to a crisis; one day she announced quite suddenly that, more or less crippled as she was for half the year, she could stand Frimhurst no longer and must really live in London! . . . It was tragic — this dream of beginning life afresh at sixty-six, these visions of theatres, concerts, and other distractions for which she no longer had health and strength. . . . I think she herself felt the hopelessness of the idea, for a few days later she told me she had abandoned it, and meant to try to make the best of things as they were. . . .

Meanwhile, little as we knew it, her days were numbered; she suddenly fell ill, and three weeks after that outburst, we buried her beside Johnny in Frimley churchyard — this mother with whom I fought so desperately, whom I loved so dearly, and of whose presence I grow daily more and more conscious. . . .

Of her death I cannot speak, except to say that it was piteous, heroic, and probably unnecessary. Had the doctor at once recognized what was wrong, had a surgeon been fetched without delay,

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perhaps her life might have been saved. Of these things, too, it is useless to think; but as time goes on, my certainty increases, mercifully for me, that some day we shall have a chance of making good our shortcomings towards those whose memory haunts us most abidingly — the people who really loved us.



CHAPTER VI. *A Retrospect*

IN 1867, my father having been given command of the Artillery at Aldershot, we left Sidcup, and took up our abode at Frimhurst in the village of Frimley, a couple of miles from Farnborough, where I lived till his death in 1894.

On the chance that other people rush as eagerly as I do to any window, no matter how humble, from which a glimpse into the past may be obtained, this seems as good a place as any to stop for a moment and try to give an idea of the social framework in which a family such as ours was set in the early seventies — a period which now seems almost as remote as *Cranford*.

It must be borne in mind that unlike the scene of that delightful book, Frimley was even then not a real country neighbourhood. The proximity of the biggest camp in England, the Staff College, and Sandhurst, brought a great deal of amusement in its train, and also that rarest element in the country, an unfailing supply of men — a consideration when you have six daughters to marry. This factor no doubt weighed with my father when, on the expiration of his Aldershot command, he decided to buy Frimhurst; besides which, as the heads of big units were automatically called on by the county families, we already knew what was dreadfully styled “the nice people.” On reflection I think the presence of a large floating population brought rather an unstable element into life. At first there was an attempt to interest us in household duties, and we took it in turns to solemnly unlock the storeroom door and watch the cook weighing out ten pounds of rice and twelve pounds

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of sugar; but by degrees this ideal lapsed, and ended, much to the relief of the younger members of the family, in a sort of budget system, checked on Saturdays by Papa.

About one thing there was no slackness; neighbourliness and entertaining were looked on as duties; everyone who had a garden gave garden parties, and those who had the means dinner parties, on which latter occasions terrible things went on after dinner in the way of music. One of our neighbours belonging to the "nice people" class never dined out without his cornet-à-pistons, on which instrument he would blast forth "*Ah che la morte ognora*," accompanied by his gentle smiling wife, who said the cornet-box was so nice in the brougham, keeping one's feet out of the draught. As for calling, that duty ranked immediately after going to church on Sunday, but it was an axiom that the more exalted the old resident's social position, the less would be the alacrity shown in swallowing fresh bait. Thus from lips of persons trembling on the verge of friendliness you often heard the remark: "So-and-so hasn't called yet." I suppose this is human nature but it seems very snobbish and ridiculous.

Incidentally, by way of keeping up the moral tone of the neighbourhood, cruel actions would be committed. I remember one couple, humdrum and apparently respectable to a fault; he, a big, blowsy, rather foolish-looking man less like a Lovelace than any male on this planet; she, tall, elegant in the washed-out style; both of them more than humble and apologetic, as was only right, for it was darkly rumoured that once upon a time things had not been as they should between them. It had all happened, if ever, long ago, and meanwhile here they were in our midst, childless, middle-aged, and tightly married; none the less ostracism, mitigated but inflexible, was their lot. They were asked to the large garden parties, seldom to small ones, and never, never to dinner. . . . Yes! once, for the wife of a Staff College officer, the Hon. Mrs. Somebody, whose forgotten name and kind heart I bless, actually did ask the outcasts to dine, and for a moment their stocks went up with a bound. But after all the Hon. Mrs. Somebody, though an aristocrat, was a bird of passage, whose vagaries should not influence the settled attitude of permanent residents, so back the poor couple went to the Arctic Circle.

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If any clergyman should read these lines let me tell him that I, a child, often wondered how this sort of thing squared with the Christian charity talked about in the pulpit. Children accept many strange things unquestioningly, still more they never notice at all, but that thing I noticed sharply and felt about as violently as I do now. Had anyone spoken in this sense to our old rector, I can imagine his embarrassment, the nervous giggle, the mumbled platitude, the hasty retreat; for he was not, and did not pretend to be, a strenuous priest, but simply an incumbent of the old school — that is, a man of good family and education, who looked upon his rectorship as a sinecure, and would have considered special attention to the morals and spiritual needs of his flock eccentric and rather impertinent.

Then there were the county balls to which of course residents subscribed, and at which the humbler country families had the privilege of mingling with the magnates and trying to identify the brilliant units of their house parties. At Guildford the ball was not supposed to have really started till the contingents from East Horseley Towers, Peper Harow, and Clandon had arrived; and quantities of people only began to enjoy themselves when the grandees, who seldom stayed long, had departed, taking with them the deadly hypnotic power they exercised over the smaller fry.

Of course these great ones gave balls, also humbler people like ourselves, but we called them dances. To step for a moment out of our neighbourhood: staying in Yorkshire, when I was about sixteen, with the mother of a school friend, I was taken to Wentworth, where once a week, all the time they were in residence, Lord and Lady Fitzwilliam received any friends and acquaintances who chose to come. Lord Fitzwilliam, who was then Lord-Lieutenant, wore breeches, silk stockings, and his Garter ribbon, and everything, including the stand-up supper, was most gorgeous, yet somehow or other homely. There might be forty guests, there might be a hundred and fifty, according to the weather, and these entertainments must have cost a great deal, but thus did Lord Fitzwilliam conceive his duty towards his neighbour. I remember that my hostess, a cousin of Lady Fitzwilliam's and herself a woman of very good family, made a little curtsy when she greeted the lady of the house — a survival of respect for office which struck me curiously and agree-

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ably. The whole thing was a glimpse of an epoch even then belonging to the past.

To return to Frimhurst. The military environment of course affected the rural population and indeed may be said to have created Frimley, which, originally a few straggling cottages on the verge of a big stretch of heather-land, only became an independent village when Aldershot was selected as site for the camp. Hence there were very few old farmhouses about, but in one of these, of which only a ruined cart-shed now remains, I have tasted home-made gooseberry wine — a beverage now almost as mythical as metheglyn. I wonder how many miles west of Frimley you would have to travel nowadays to find a farm where it is still concocted.

Of our relations with the villagers I have few recollections, nor were they typical, because there was little feudal tradition in such a neighbourhood, and that little in course of extinction. Partly from egotism, but mainly, I honestly think, because it always struck me as indiscreet, I myself did little visiting among our poorer neighbours. But the associations of a common youth are imperishable things, and between myself and contemporary Frimleyites, especially younger ones who were in my Sunday-school class, a very tender bond still exists, though I don't see them often. I remember that extremely poor old women used to come up on Saturdays for soup, and when a doctor's order could be produced, for a bottle of port. There also were presents at Christmas, and one old woman once wrote to my mother: "If there are any flannel petticoats or other Xmas gifts going I shall be found very acceptable."

This of course was private charity — what a foreign cook of ours called "giving to the door" — but on the subject of official outdoor relief my father held, in common with most poor-law guardians, what the women of his family used to think unsympathetic views. The strong objection felt by every villager I have ever come across to "the House" was in his opinion unreasonable and pig-headed, especially, perhaps, because he took immense trouble about his own Farnham Union and described it as a sort of earthly paradise. Alas! though the horrors exposed in *Oliver Twist* had been abolished, their memory was in the blood of the people. It seems to me that willingness to get along anyhow at home, rather than be obviously on the parish, is not without dignity, and if outdoor re-

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lief is actually being received you still are keeping up appearances — a decent form of the hypocrisy so dear to English minds. But to understand all this requires imagination, my father's weak point.

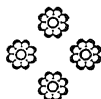
Where the question was one of level-headedness and common sense he never failed. For instance when the County Council schemes destroyed the monopoly of the gentry to sit on the Bench, many of his brother magistrates were prepared to resign rather than act on terms of equality with the grocer; but my father maintained it was more than ever the duty of men of breeding and education to stick to the ship and keep touch with the class in whose hands more and more power was likely to be placed. The result was that not one of the old magistrates resigned.

On one point I am of course absolutely ignorant, the morality of our rural population. After the revelations that came to all women in the fight for the vote, and since I myself reached an age at which it is possible to glean first-hand evidence, and know how even the best and most decent "good fellows" of one's own acquaintance live, what chiefly amazes me is the contrast between the smooth surface of society and the orgiastic whirlpool below. This surface, particularly smooth in England, is worked up by each race according to its genius and must be assumed to be a necessity, but it is strange to think how completely women of my generation were taken in by it. Of course with the vote the worst evils, bred of our complete divorce from reality, will be gradually removed, which is better than nothing — being about as much as the individual who attempts to reform his own character can hope for.

It is a commonplace to mention the decrease of drunkenness, but I do it because if, as a child, you were in the habit of walking about country lanes, the altered state of things comes home to you with more force than as a thesis found in a pamphlet on social evolution. It was quite usual then to see men reeling about the roads on Saturdays and Sundays, now it is quite the exception. So much so that on hearing recently how the stately footman of a friend of ours was ordered to descend from the box and assist an invalid in the ditch, who turned out to be an old gipsy woman, exceedingly drunk and only equal to ejaculating repeatedly: "Blesh you darlin', blesh you darlin'," one had quite a sentimental old-times feeling.

In conclusion, if these general observations seem, as they do to

me, somewhat meagre, it only proves what was said before — that life in our neighbourhood was not of the classical well-ordered rural type, but rather a foretaste of the cinema.



CHAPTER VII. 1867-72

I HAVE been trying to recall whether up to the time of our migration to Frimhurst I had shown a special bent for music. Probably, for Père Rouillard specially mentioned that “Martin Landor” was for “*la petite musicienne*.” I don’t think I composed in the Sidcup days, but Mary and I sang little duets, simple tunes to which I put “seconds” as it was called, and in the quality of those seconds and my accompaniments, I myself, had I been listening, should certainly have detected a natural gift. But to judge these things takes an expert, and my mother had had no real musical training. Transposing and playing by ear came naturally to me, but so it did to her, so she would not have been much impressed by that; or perhaps she thought I was conceited enough without special encouragement as regards my music; anyhow I cannot remember hearing or thinking much about it.

On a very hot September afternoon we arrived at North Camp Station, and I was one of a detachment that walked the two and a half miles to Frimhurst along the pretty Basingstoke Canal, past Mitchett Lake, scene of many future boating excursions. My father’s walking powers were certainly unimpaired at that time, for I remember trotting occasionally in order to keep up with him and wishing he would not walk so fast. Dragonflies were poising and darting among the reeds. I had never seen any before and thought them the most beautiful things imaginable.

The entrance to the grounds may have played a part in my father’s decision to take Frimhurst, for it is the sort of entrance that makes an owner modest about the rent. At this point the South-Western Railway passes under the canal, and for about twenty

yards the carriage drive is actually a bit of the towing path — on the one side the low tunnel-parapet, on the other some rickety posts and rails fencing the canal, so that you are between the devil and the deep sea. My father, who had an eye for a horse, generally bought quadrupeds capable of dragging a heavy landau full of people to church in single harness; for on Sundays the principle was cruelty to animals, balanced by kindness to the stable men, who thus had only one set of harness to clean. Our horses therefore were seldom of the well-bred nervy type, but often young and imperfectly trained, so it may be imagined what happened when, with a sudden roar, a train dashed out of the tunnel and sent a cloud of steam swirling into their faces. I only once saw actual evidence of an accident myself, an Artillery wagon and pair having just gone through the posts and rails; the horses were calmly standing in midstream as if that had been their original destination, waiting for the driver to return with help. After a year or two, in deference to my mother's entreaties, the height of the parapet was increased, which slightly improved matters.

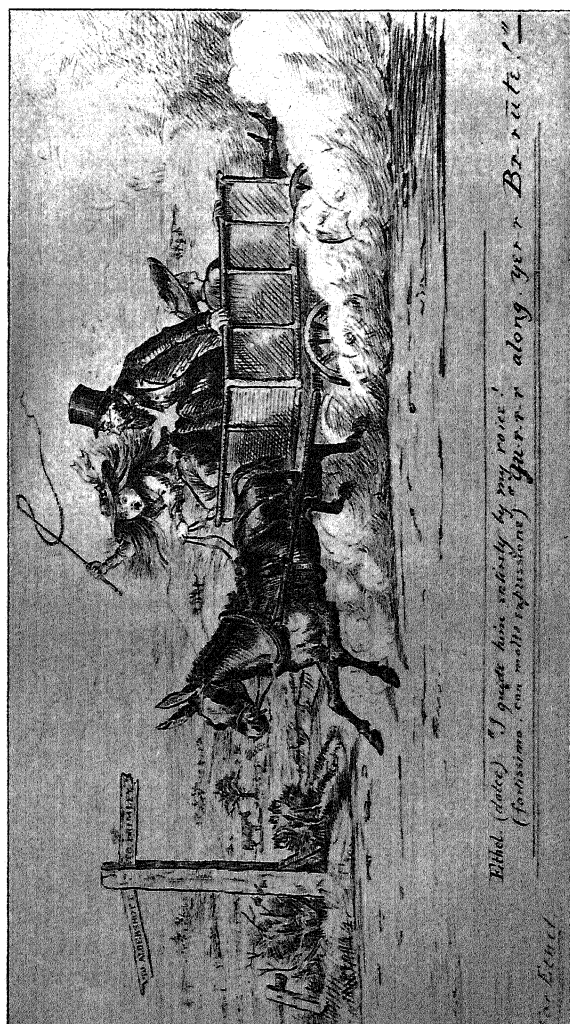
There are two celebrated incidents connected with the tunnel, the first being an amazing example of human stupidity that is almost incredible, but I witnessed it myself. Hearing a train coming, a cousin of ours, aged about twenty-five, rushed like mad to the spot, stared at the canal, and then said in tones of deep disappointment: "Why, they told me the smoke comes up through the water!!"

The second incident is far more credible. Not long after our arrival at Frimhurst Papa got a letter from the railway company, saying that boys were in the habit of hurling stones and other missiles on to the trains from the parapet, a large piece of brick having recently missed a stoker's head by a hairbreadth; and that as it was on his property would he please put a stop to the nuisance. On this occasion he modified his views regarding the methods of the police, and bade a constable hide behind the hedge and watch. One day the man came up to the house and reported he had identified the culprit. "Why didn't you bring him up here?" said my father, "I'd have rubbed his ears for him and told his mother to give him a good hiding." "Well, sir," answered the constable, "it's very awkward, but it's one of your young ladies"; and as a matter

of fact I was the culprit. Oh, the excitement of it, the preliminary piling up of ammunition and dropping of one trial stone; the rumble that told you the train had entered the tunnel; the quick guess at its pace, and the chance, supposing you had missed the tender, that something might yet be done with the final guard's van, which would emerge . . . when? I can feel the thrill of it now!

At the other end of our property was another railway bridge called Deepcut, which gives an idea of the place. Like my father I always encourage friends' and relations' children to take risks, especially if they are cursed with timorous parents, so I hope it is not too conceited to say that I really was a daring little girl myself. Nowadays I often bike over Deepcut bridge, and not for less than fifty pounds would I do today what I often did then, run along the parapet. Let me confess that I was terrified, just as in later years during perilous climbs in the Alps; and this is the fascination of both performances.

A home you came to know in later life can never be as poetical a memory as one you left when very young and never saw again. Still Frimhurst was an attractive place, a far bigger and better house than Sidcup, bounded on one side, it is true, by the deep railway cutting, on the banks of which rabbit-ferreting at once became a passion, but on the other, as a compensation, is a really picturesque section of the old canal, out of which opened a lake owned by a neighbour, where we fished and learned to skate. There were about thirty-two acres of grounds, and I think the pasturage must have been poor, as my father was for ever spreading over it a special sort of manure that seemed to consist chiefly of brickbats, sardine-tins, and old boots. By and by, when the golf passion surged into England, we vamped up a home course, and this strange manure gave trouble playing through the green, lost balls being found in the broken base of blacking bottles and other difficult places. Near the canal was a delightful orchard; one tree in it, a white-heart cherry tree with spreading branches, was the scene of many of my climbing feats and Mary's sentimental trial trips, for the cherry tree was the favourite haunt of a long series of boy lovers. I have a tragic vision of my mother in that orchard, crying as if her heart would break, the doctor having just told her there was but a slender chance of rearing Bob, the last baby.



Sketch by the Rev. Hugo J. of Himself and Mary being Driven by the Author

Lower down the canal is a series of locks, across the gates of which it was Johnny's and my delight to run. Mary, who was liable to sudden giddiness, joined in this amusement, though unwillingly, and had a system of letting herself down towards the centre of the gates, a leg on each side, and shuffling across, which was unlady-like but better than drowning. Nina, who also had a bad head, would be urged onwards by a hat-pin applied to her fat calves.

Round the canal many memories linger. I often look nowadays at a "flash" near our entrance-lodge, and think about children's first terrified glimpses of Death; for there a little boy, whom we noticed wading as we crossed the bridge one day, lost his footing, and was carried home a corpse to his mother before we came back again across the bridge. I remember Alice telling me God had taken the little boy to Himself, that all was well with him, and that I must not be so terror-stricken and miserable about it. . . .

My father always said what finally decided him to take Frimhurst was the fine drawing-room which would make "such a nice room for your mother." It certainly was delightful in summer, but nowadays would hardly be considered habitable in the winter, with its solitary fireplace and five French windows, three of which were in the bow-window where my poor mother used to write her letters. Central heating was then unknown in England, and my father would have considered it a most unhealthful invention, but I am certain the appalling cold of that room, and of her big bedroom above it, must have been still more unhealthful for one leading a sedentary life. Indeed, I often wonder whether the slowness of thought that characterizes our race is not the result of an insane objection to warm rooms, ending in congealed brain.

The schoolroom was in the oldest part of the house. The windows, sort of square portholes, to see out of which you had to stand up, were shuttered at night by sliding mirrors. Running under them horizontally on the outside wall were ivy branches as thick as a man's arm, the furry coating of which was worn to the bone by the boots of climbing children. All our many governesses resembled each other in one particular: that when reading after supper on summer evenings they would see ghostly heads peeping in at the portholes, shoot the shutters with a bang, and rush into the passage screaming: "Burglars!"

This room was the only one with charm in an otherwise commonplace but very comfortable house.

It was in the year following our arrival at Frimhurst that Bob, the boy who was to console my mother for the coming loss of Johnny, was born. He was a very quiet, delicate child, and according to a family legend never spoke till the day he was sitting under the table, clipping the cat's fur with a pair of scissors, and told to desist; whereupon he suddenly burst into speech with the remark "All the cats in the *wairld* aren't yours!" and never ceased talking afterwards. It is odd that all I can remember of the two youngest children in their extreme youth is this legend, and a riddle asked by Nelly: "If a new-laid egg could speak, what jam would it mention?" Answer: "Ma-me-laid."

Johnny was now a Westminster boy. My father's youngest sister had married Dr. Charles Scott, who at this time was Headmaster of Westminster, and Mary and I sometimes spent the night at their house in Dean's Yard. From our window we had a grand view of the boys playing racquets against the schoolhouse wall, or flying into school in their trenchers; and occasionally we caught sight of my uncle, in cap and gown, sweeping across the school yard, always in a violent hurry. It was understood that if we met Johnny in the cloisters or any other part of the dear old buildings we must make no sign of recognition and expect to be cut. We were.

This childless uncle and aunt always spent Christmas with us, hardly a comfortable arrangement I should think for Johnny, but he was a more than satisfactory pupil, and my cold, stately, alarming aunt worshipped him — as I remember realizing with a start when, in a letter she wrote my mother after his death, I read the words: "He was the apple of my eye." Of my uncle we were terrified in our early days. He was really one of the dearest, warmest-hearted of men but every inch a schoolmaster, and I never knew anyone who suffered fools less gladly. His severe manner, intolerance of contradiction, and general dictatorialness, amounting I fear to quarrelsomeness, were supposed to stand in his way when bishops were being nominated; but aloofness from intrigue and time-serving probably hampered him still more. He always preached the Christ-

mas sermon in Frimley Church, which was looked forward to as a great intellectual treat by the congregation.

On Christmas Day we children came down to dinner, and after snapdragons and punch, grown-ups and all played round games, generally "commerce." When my father began explaining what card one ought to have played, Uncle Charles would say in his high-pitched, querulous voice: "Now, John, do let an old schoolmaster make the matter clear to the child," and proceed to do this in a manner so involved that my mother, whom he was very fond of, once exclaimed: "Really, Charles, I don't know if you understand your own explanations, but no one else can." She was more than free and unabashed with this alarming personality, a freedom that filled us with the same awe as did the ways of Colonel O'H—with Papa. One day, driving with him through Aldershot, he dozing on the opposite seat, she poked him hard with her parasol and said: "Do wake up; they'll think I am driving through the camp with a tipsy clergyman." I remember once, in one of those silences that sometimes fall on a large party, asking quite innocently: "What is a pedagogue?" Result: still deader silence, and then everyone laughed rather nervously.

Daily as the clock struck twelve these two would sally forth on a constitutional up the Windmill Hill just outside our gates, and afford a spectacle rare, I think, in England, but which may be enjoyed on Sundays throughout the whole German Empire; that is, he always stalked along a good ten yards in front of his wife. Thus they started, and thus they returned at twelve forty-five, and while kicking off his goloshes in the porch he would hold the door open and say impatiently: "Come along, Susān" (with a slight accent on the second syllable), and she would give a little nervous giggle to which she was subject, but not hurry in the very least. This was the invariable ritual. When their visit was concluded, a fly and pair was heaped up with maid and luggage and they started on a ten-mile drive across Fox Hills and the Hog's Back, along a beautiful road since closed to all but the military, to pay Christmas visit Number 2 to another cousin of his, Lord Midleton. For some time afterwards Peper Harow rang, as did Frimhurst, with anecdotes about what Uncle Charles said to the lodge-keeper who hoped he was quite well, or to the rash lady who asked if schoolmastering was not

a very interesting task. When he was about to annihilate somebody he would begin with an impatient, almost larmoyant "My dear sir" or "madam," which caused a hush to fall upon the assembly, sportsman, lover, or bore breaking off his tale to be in at the death. I don't think he was a popular Headmaster, though greatly respected; but only in private life did you get to know the real man.

Once, many years after the time I am speaking of, a tragedy happened on that bit of closed country on the Fox Hills. There are rifle butts up there, and one foggy day hounds ran into the danger zone. Suddenly realizing where he was, the Master began blowing his horn frantically, and while one of our Frimley neighbours was saying to her son: "I wonder what that's for," the boy fell from his horse dead at her feet, a stray bullet having passed through his brain.



CHAPTER VIII. 1867-72

LIFE at Frimhurst up to the time I came out falls into two periods, the governess and the school epochs. Our governesses never stayed long; they pass before my mind's eye in dreary procession; some English, others German; some with dyspepsia, others with unfortunate natures — perhaps the same thing under different names; nearly always ugly, and quite invariably without the faintest notion of making lessons either pleasant or profitable. Certainly we were difficult pupils, naughty and refractory to discipline; still, we were quite intelligent children, and later on Mary and I learned something at school; but excepting one, who without intending it determined my course in life, our governesses might have been lay-figures for all we got out of them. I think the whole governess system monstrous and unworkable; even as a child I vaguely understood how impossible is the position of these poor unwilling intruders into the family circle, and hope time will evolve some more civilized scheme of education for "the daughters of the nobility and

gentry." On the other hand our governesses were specimens of humanity few families, however kind-hearted, could assimilate.

I have said I was subject to "passions" as I called them, and about this time drew up a list of over a hundred girls and women to whom, had I been a man, I should have proposed; it is therefore no great tribute to the charms of Miss Hammond, the first governess I remember, that her name figured on the list of passions. She was young, rather pretty, and wore a chignon which she told us was her own hair. Perhaps she meant in the sense that she had paid for it, for alas! one day she slipped up on the ice and away rolled the chignon like the heart in Richepin's terrifying ballad, but without asking its owner if she had hurt herself. I said nothing; one is too paralysed by dreadful emotion to speak at such moments, but then and there my passion expired.

And now comes the recital of one of the ugliest things I ever did. A few months later Miss Hammond departed for good in the same low pony-chaise with which these records begin . . . and as it sped down the drive I clung on to the back, hissed in her ear: "I know your chignon is false!" and dropped off. I was quite aware that my action was hateful, but it is not till old age is in sight that sincerity-mad people can quietly let a deceiver think his deception has been a success.

H. B., the great friend of my maturer years, and the wisest man I ever knew, had agreeable views on the subject of making up; he said it predisposed him in a person's favour, as showing a wish to please. I quite see this point of view, but it is not mine, and in my youth I felt about it so violently that I remember telling my mother, who was demonstrative and craved for demonstration, that I should kiss her much oftener but for her "powder and things." "Things" stood for the very moderate amount of rouge and kohl with which, as I said, she repaired the ravages of time, and I am glad to say my remark produced not the slightest change in this innocent habit.

One of Miss Hammond's successors presented my mother with the most astonishing specimen of German ingenuity I have ever seen, except perhaps similar souvenirs fabricated by the grand dukes and duchesses who clustered round Goethe in his country retreat and deigned to live the simple life there. This treasure is made of thin wire, small black beads, and eight locks cut from the eight

heads of the Smyth children, and represents a bunch of blackberries, the berries being made of beads, and the leaves — how she did it I cannot think — of hair. There were all shades in our family, from black to flaxen, but though the leaves are still shapely and tidy, age and dust have wrought them all to the same dull hue. By immemorial custom this strange object has lived under a glass shade, stuck into one of Prince Charlie's goblets, and there it is, confronting me at this moment.

During the Franco-Prussian War, when we had a rather feeble-minded German governess, we used to rush in to her first thing in the morning announcing imaginary German defeats — and the poor governesses never saw the papers till evening! We were too young to have any bias one way or the other, though my mother of course was all for the French; it was just the ferocious playfulness of youth. The sanctimonious tone of the Hohenzollern telegrams, to which the world is now accustomed, was then a novelty and caused much astonishment. There was a paraphrase by Mr. Punch of one of the King of Prussia's effusions to his Queen which delighted Papa:

*By Heaven's will, my dear Augusta
We've had another awful buster,
Ten thousand Frenchmen gone below!
Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!*

By such trivial incidents do great contemporary events hook themselves into the memory of a child. Except the fact that we all picked lint, these are my only recollections connected with a war of which the whole world has not yet finished reaping the harvest! . . .

Besides the catalogue of "passions" I drew up a paper I would give anything to study today — a list of things to be avoided when one should be grown up. One was "never tell people what your parents used to say," my mother having a way of quoting, for our benefit, axioms used against her in her childhood by her own mother, which made us think Bonnemaman must have been a most disagreeable person. Apart from this, one noticed that the words "As my father used to say" strike a chill at all times and in all

places. There was another golden rule I have since broken only too often, alas! never to speak of one's digestion (unless to the doctor, who, as Lady Constance Leslie once remarked, is paid to put up with that style of conversation). This rule came on to the list because of an objectionable habit one of our governesses had, of extending herself after lunch in an armchair, her legs stuck out stiffly, and many cushions rammed into her back — her body being thus in a straight line at an angle of 45° to the floor, which posture she considered favourable to digestion. People who remember their childhood will guess how fiercely we resented this spectacle.

Under the eye of successive governesses we painfully translated into French and German stories such as George Washington saying: "Father, I cannot tell a lie, I cut down that apple tree!" or Newton wagging his head at the dog that had just devoured his astronomical notes and merely remarking: "O Diamond, Diamond, you do not know what mischief you have done!" (which shows he was not fit to keep a dog). These two odious anecdotes might well implant in childish bosoms a life-long aversion to the qualities of truthfulness and self-command. In short we pursued the usual course of instruction in the usual manner. But one thing I will say: from Mrs. Markham's *History of England*, a book recently re-read with delight, I learned all the history I knew till the day dawned for loving Shakespere, and consider these two together can defy the universe as quickeners of an historical sense in the young.

Between lesson hours, and of course in the holidays, we had heaps of fun. Our end of Frimley consisted of a few houses grouped about a village green, and if I were to be asked who looms largest in my mind during those years I should unhesitatingly say: "Mrs. Hall of the tin-shop," the unforgettable owner of a rural emporium where everything from sweets to carpets could be got. Shrewd, good-looking, quick-tempered, as full of kindness as of mother-wit, and a mistress of lightning repartee, this true descendant of Mrs. Poyser ruled her husband and four big sons, mostly farm labourers, with a rod of iron, and spoiled us children to our hearts' content. Heaven only knows what amount of sweets she gave away in overweight. There too I bought the penny whistles to which we danced Sir Roger de Coverley on the ice — for our skating days had now dawned — and let me say that to dance on skates and play that par-

ticularly breathless tune at the same time is one of the most exhausting feats in the world.

The village boasted an annual fair, long since gone the way of most country fairs, and great fun we found it; but the appearance presented by the Green after the merry-go-rounds and coconut shies were gone left me with so disagreeable an impression as almost to put me off the fair itself — on which theme, if one were a poet and classical scholar, a neat Latin ode might be written.

We always had one, sometimes two donkeys; the other day a grey-headed man in Frimley told me he remembered, as schoolboy, my riding into the village school right among the children, mounted on a black donkey. One of my most cherished possessions is the accompanying sketch, already referred to, by our cousin Hugo of a drive in the donkey-cart — a sketch which incidentally shows that structural differences in Mary's and my character, though concealed by the childish plumpness of our moral outline, did not escape this shrewd observer's eye. As she sits calm and unmoved, with feet neatly placed together in the drab boots with shiny toes I remember so well, her profile indicates the total detachment of a young lady out for an airing. That picture has special mention in my Will.

Sometimes we raised, I cannot think how, a team of four, and the harness-room was raided for reins and traces; this four-in-hand was a grand thing to talk about but not really a success, for one had to crawl along the backs of the wheelers in order to thump the leaders with the butt end of the whip. I cannot recall either Johnny or Mary taking the initiative in these donkey affairs, and Nina, whose subsequent adventures would fill tomes, was not then old enough to join in ours. In fact all I can remember about her at that period was her approaching Violet one day, obviously uneasy in her mind, and saying she had something "very funny" to show her in the roserie. It turned out to be two expiring frogs which she had impaled; . . . the hour of confession had struck!

Frimley Church was two miles off, a modern building, monument of some architect's whole-hearted devotion to hideousness, the only sympathetic feature being an old-fashioned three-decker pulpit, but even that was of deal and relatively new. At each church festival the donkey-cart was piled up with whatever might be the

appropriate fruits of nature, and off we started to decorate the church, the great point being lunch with a kind old neighbour close by. I have said that as a tiny child I was terrified of churchyards, but at this time they must have had a morbid attraction, or perhaps it was under the influence of *Hamlet* that I loved to watch the sexton at work and "think of graves and worms and epitaphs" as the young will — and as the old won't. It may be remembered too that in order to increase the agony of love I would cheerfully consign my "passions" to an early grave, but as regards myself terrors of death haunted me throughout my youth, and it was perhaps with some vague idea of conjuring the spectre that I persuaded the sexton to give me a human bone, which I hid among my collars and handkerchiefs. But this relic left me no peace, for I knew its possession was sacrilegious, and at last in floods of tears confessed all to my mother. I think she was a good deal taken aback, but explained quite gently that it would never do, when the Day of Judgment comes, for people's limbs to be scattered about in different places. Evidently she had never read, or did not go with, a work called *The Last Day*, from which Mr. Gosse quotes, in his book *Father and Son*, the following remarkable verse:

*Now charnels rattle, scattered limbs, and all
The various bones, obsequious to the call,
Self-mov'd advance — the neck perhaps to meet
The distant head, the distant legs the feet.*

Meanwhile she undertook to have the bone put back in the place it came from, and later informed me that all was well, the sexton having assured her it was a sheep's bone, and that he never would have dreamed of giving me human remains. I often wonder if this was a legend invented by her to soothe my inflamed and suffering imagination, or whether the sexton, afraid of getting into trouble, really hazarded this improbable yarn.

I call him the sexton, but he was only an understudy, the real one being ninety-six and long past grave-digging, but to the end he stuck to his post of clerk. Seated in the lowest box of the three-decker, his gold-rimmed spectacles poised on the very tip of his nose, his old forefinger travelling across the pages of a huge prayer-book as smoothly as the hands of a clock, he would bleat out an amazing

long "A-mä-ä-ä-ä-n" that would throw rapid performers like Uncle Charles out of their stride. People used to come from neighbouring parishes to hear old Mr. Weston say "Amen."

A fantastic scene, which no one who saw it can ever have forgotten, once took place in the three-decker. As I said, my uncle always preached on Christmas morning, but one Christmas there was another clerical star staying in the parish, who had been asked to take the service, and understood he was also to oblige with a sermon. He had duly read the Prayers from the middle box, and had just opened the door, preparatory to climbing up into the highest or preacher's box, when my uncle, who had been sitting robed within the altar rails, came sweeping along at his usual rushing pace and also made for the top box. They met on the narrow staircase, each with a tightly rolled manuscript in his hand, and a rather heated altercation took place, neither being of the nature that gives way. What with the shape of the three-decker, and the baton-like appearance of the manuscripts, there was more than a slight suggestion of Mr. Punch and the policeman. I cannot remember who won the day, though I feel sure it must have been my uncle, but the aged clerk, cross-questioned about this scandalous incident, said he really didn't know what to make of it; and it probably was too much for him, for he died soon afterwards.

In the summer there were picnics on the canal, and plenty of canoeing though none of us could swim. I remember seeing a black thing crawling out of the water in our wake which we all thought was the retriever, but it turned out to be Nina smothered in canal mud. Not long after our arrival at Frimhurst, lawn tennis, preceded by badminton, became the fashion, and I think for a time everything was dropped for that. We no longer built but bought racing craft, without neglecting other carpentering. I know I was a better hand at it than either Johnny or Maunsell B—. My three-legged stools and tables may have been less ambitious than theirs, but they neither wobbled nor broke down, and started in me at an early age the complete confidence I was to feel later in woman as co-architect of the State.

In the winter there were entertainments at the schools on whatever Saturday in the month had most moon. At one of these I made my first public appearance, singing duets at the age of eleven with

Mary, aged thirteen, and Mother accompanied us in order to give my voice a better chance. Papa was nearly always on the programme, reading poems such as "The Raven," "We are Seven," and extracts from *The Siege of Corinth*, which the modern rustic mind, fed on cheap novelettes and cinema, would not stand for a moment, but I think they liked it then. Other neighbouring gentry contributed items, and passing talent was enlisted. I remember an enormously stout bird of passage who had a habit cultivated by many more famous contralti of "singing like a man" as I called it, and in this deep chest voice she used to give us a song much in vogue called "The Diver." In case this work has vanished from the market, I cannot help quoting the music of the refrain, surely more realistic and funny than most things on earth. We sometimes met



revellers on the walk home, and tactical manœuvres were necessary to avoid them. Once a local patriarch remarked, as he saluted us unsteadily, that really the General ought to get the hedges cut back.

My first violent religious impression falls in the early days of our Frimhurst life, when we were taken by an Evangelical cousin to a bazaar at Aldershot for the benefit of soldiers' orphans, got up by Miss Daniel, forerunner of the Y.M.C.A.; after which there was to be an address by Lord Radstock. We had never been to a bazaar before and passionately hated it. Late in the afternoon I remember Miss Daniel saying: "Now you will hear *something better* than bazaars," and presently a dislike of Low Church, conceived in contact with our cousin, became loathing under the influence of Lord Radstock's manner, expressions, voice, and puffy, white-maggot-like physique. I am sure he was a good man, but he made us hate religion for the time being.

Another early Aldershot recollection is Mary and me being taken to sing at an R.A. entertainment, when an appropriate variant of my father's usual peroration came out with tremendous emphasis as addressed to a military audience. Our coachman, an ex-Artillery-

man, was in a terrible way lest we should not do ourselves justice, exhorting us to hold our heads well up, and not hide our faces with the music. "Remember, Miss Mary," he said, "it's the *hattitude* as does it." We bore George Taylor's advice in mind and on musical occasions in later life one could not desire a more gratifying reception than the Colonel's little girls met with.

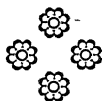
As a printed contemporary notice lends relief to very trivial incidents, I give an extract from *Sheldrake's Gazette* (still the leading Aldershot journal) which I found among old papers:

On this occasion the Colonel's two fair daughters appeared upon the platform to sing a duet, and the applause with which they were greeted was indescribable. Each possessing a sweet voice, the effect was exceedingly telling, the duet being so exquisitely rendered that an enthusiastic encore was called for. Mrs. Smyth accompanied her daughters in the first duet, and in the second the younger of the two fair sisters presided at the piano. This was the first appearance of ladies on the platform in this room, and that their noble example may be followed is the earnest wish of all who take delight in these excellent entertainments; for assuredly nothing is more likely to tend to their success than the offer of the services of ladies who possess musical talent, and are willing to contribute to the entertainment of the soldier during the winter months.

Before reading the piece he had selected for Tuesday evening ("The Death of Montrose") the noble Colonel, addressing his men, said, — and he spoke with an earnestness that must have made itself felt in the breasts of every one of them: "I read these selections to you, my men, because they treat of noble lives, and in the hope that they may be incentives to you in the path of duty. I wish to impress upon you that it is expected of us at every time, and in every clime, whether amidst frost and snow, or pestilential famine and disease, to endure without murmuring hardships of every kind. Let me also impress upon you strongly that when required to face death we should do so without fear, but in hope of mercy and forgiveness, and be ever ready to lay down our lives for our Queen, our country, and our God." I can hardly describe the enthusiasm with which these few words were met, and can attribute it to no other cause than the high confidence and esteem placed in their Colonel, and the love of their country which exists in the breast of the British soldier. [This encomium is no great compliment to the "few words" themselves, but one mustn't split hairs.]

Of one personality frequently met with during the Christmas holidays at children's parties I have an ineffaceable recollection, the Conjuror — a round, bright-eyed little old man with a shock of grey curly hair, who never ceased entreating us to watch him closely; "Now don't take your eyes off me, my little dears," he would say; "*it's while I'm a talking to you that I'm a deceiving of you*" — a phrase that was adopted by the family. At one time he nearly died, and when able to resume business he remarked to my mother, pointing to his fat helpmate: "When I was bad I used to say to 'er: 'You may get another *'usband*, my dear, but you won't get another *conjuror*.'"

For my part, as soon as I realized I should never guess how these tricks are done, conjuring rather exasperated me, my feeling then as now being: what's the fun of not understanding? Or again, why crack your brain about something you know is really quite simple? For which reason I am never tempted by the later works of Mr. Henry James. Montaigne was of the same way of thinking, and says somewhere that when he comes to an obscure paragraph he makes one or two "charges" at it, and then, if the meaning still eludes him, throws away that book for good and all.



CHAPTER IX. 1867-72

Not long after our arrival at Frimhurst, Alice was presented and came out. There were five years between her and Mary, and since, as I said, there were four between Nina and me, Mary and I were in a schoolroom group by ourselves. For this reason I can remember nothing about Alice's proceedings, with one momentous exception — her first proposal, or anyhow the first at which we, so to speak, assisted. There was a certain young soldier with very pink cheeks and a strange habit of wearing velveteen coats — an assiduous visitor whose attentions became marked. One day we saw him leaving the house in evident agitation, and when, with the tact of younger

sisters, we instantly rushed into the drawing-room, lo! there was Alice, supported by mother, being plied with smelling-salts! In Jane Austen's day this was the correct attitude for a girl of sensibility on tender occasions, and to that epoch Alice belonged by education and temperament; but Mary and I were early samples of the coming generation and poor Alice never heard the last of that touching tableau. She declares to this day it was a figment of our imaginations, but it was not, and I am glad to have seen this sort of thing with my own eyes, for we shall never see it again.

Whether forerunners or not, Mary and I were still considered very quaint children, as in the Sidcup days, and were infuriated by a strange young lady who called to her brother through the window: "O Lionel, do come in and hear these funny children talk," whereupon we of course fell silent, as self-respecting children would. Neither of us was in the least shy, but when in the presence of one of my "passions," I was liable, under the stress of emotion, to extraordinary contortions; such as standing on the outside of my feet, swaying to and fro, brushing the palm of one hand violently against the other in mid-air, as if one were flint and the other steel — antics that Mary, who knew the cause, eyed with scornful astonishment.

It is to be hoped, more especially as these memoirs are pointedly dedicated to people with sense of humour, that no one will imagine we chronically disapproved of each other or were for ever competing and quarrelling. Like all healthy-minded children we had our little rivalries and ambitions, a large stock of cocksureness as to who was in the right . . . and both of us had tempers. Hence, though our differences were no longer settled with knives and forks, there were plenty of rows, but as a matter of fact we were devoted to each other, and so closely identified in people's minds that, much to our annoyance, our parents would sometimes say: "Mary and Ethel, shut the door." Believers in the saint-like children met with in books, who probably view their own vanished childhood in the same unreal light, may not be of my opinion, but I hold that no great attachment is possible between young growing things without these clashes of temperament, and that you are all the better friends afterwards. Thus it was at any rate in our case.

It had always been an axiom in the family that from earliest years Mary had been drawn by me into tomboyish ways that really

were foreign to her nature. I think this is probably true; anyhow, as time went on, boys who began by being attracted by my independence and proficiency in games always ended by forsaking me in order to minister to Mary's more feminine helplessness — buckling on her skates for her, or in response to a piteous "Help me! I'm giddy!" flying to her rescue among the higher branches of the old cherry tree. I remember various incidents connected with faithless boy lovers of mine, but think that in all this I was playing a part, doing what I knew was the correct thing. Now and again a very real feeling of mortification may have swept over me as I saw my admirers succumbing to the charms of Mary, but from the first my most ardent sentiments were bestowed on members of my own sex, and the love-affairs with boys were but imitative and trashy, I fear.

The other day I came upon a draft of a letter addressed to a very dull Harrow boy who afterwards took Holy Orders. Oddly enough all my admirers became schoolmasters, or clergymen, or both; perhaps I was the one wild adventure of coast-hugging spirits who immediately afterwards reverted to type. This particular lover seems, however, to have reverted prematurely, and the letter began: "O Willie, Willie! how could you deceive a poor girl as you have me?" — which shows that my style was formed either on Shakespere or the nursery maid, who under these circumstances use identical language.

Humble as is the mood reflected in this letter, my father and most of the relations rightly considered that I had an overweening opinion of myself; in fact Papa said I reminded him of Lord John Russell, of which notoriously conceited statesman the *Times* remarked that he would be quite willing to take command of the Channel Fleet at a moment's notice. No doubt the parallel was justified, and I may have deserved the plentiful snubbing I got, but no amount of it ever shook my conviction that I was more musical than they had any idea of. For instance my mother and I were once hunting in some music books for a certain composition, but whereas she played the first bar of each piece in her book with one hand, I just gave a glance and turned the page of mine. "Take care, you'll miss it," cried she, and I said to myself: "She doesn't know as much as I!" but didn't tell her so because I loved her — a rare

case of abstention from boasting which astonished me myself, and which I cannot help mentioning.

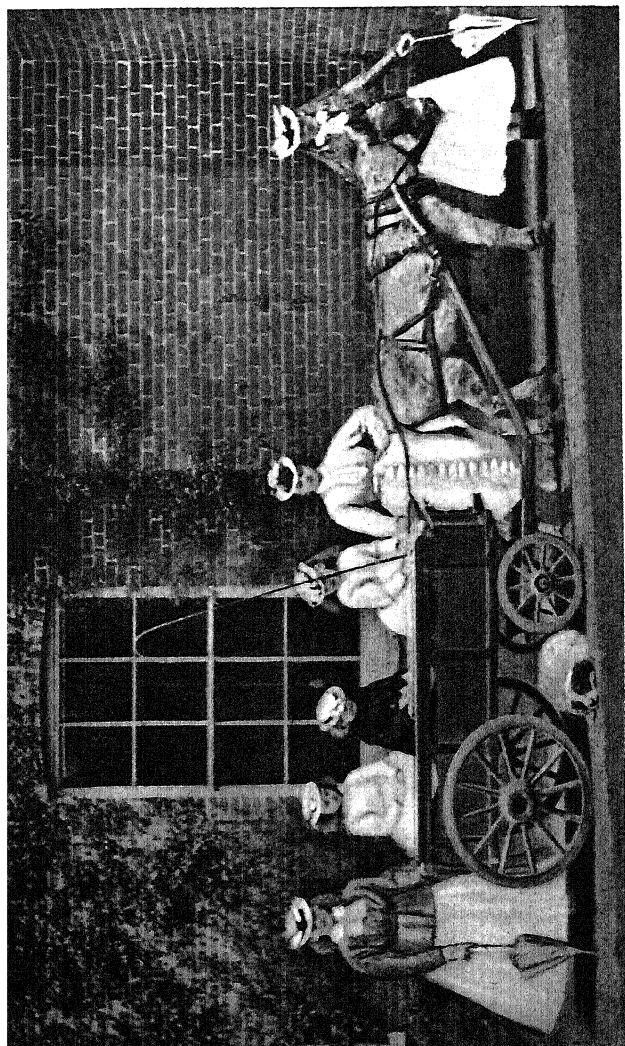
I have said that she lost her beautiful voice long before the usual age, but in the earlier Frimhurst days, when she was between forty-three and forty-five, she still sang occasionally, and one of her songs, my father's favourite, "Of what is the old man thinking?" had a charming melody, her perfect phrasing of which struck even me, a child. But the song I liked best — really a duet, only I never heard it in that form — was a certain little masterpiece all on the tonic, dominant, and sub-dominant (a great test) — full of accent and fun as to both music and words. It was called, I think, "Mr. and Mrs. Smith," and illustrated to perfection H. B.'s theory that "English married life bases on snarling." Mrs. Smith had apparently expressed a wish to go to Brighton, and the ball opens with her husband's comments on this proposal. I cannot refrain from giving the first four bars and some of the verses, the last three lines of which are always repeated.

The image shows a musical score for a duet. The top system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in eighth and sixteenth notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are: "Misses Smith, up - on my word, it is really too ab - surd! I de-". The bottom system also consists of a treble clef staff with the same key signature and time signature. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are: "clare there's no one like you ei - ther far or near! Win - ter".

(MR. SMITH)

*Mrs. Smith, upon my word,
You are really too absurd!*

*I declare there's no one like you either far — or — near!
Winter, Summer, Autumn, Spring,
You're for ever on the wing,
Never quiet for a moment, Mrs. Smith — my — dear!*



ETHEL

Mary Violet Nelly "Bango" Nina Alice

The Six Miss Smyths and "Bango"

(MRS. SMITH)

O my love, now in your conscience
 How can you talk such nonsense!
 I declare your little judgment isn't o — ver — clear;
 There's a time of year that carries
 Ev'ry soul to Rome or Paris,
 And I only mentioned Brighton, Mr. Smith — my — dear!

After a stanza or two which I have forgotten:

(MR. SMITH)

Then your bonnets, caps, and curls,
 Combs, and trinkets for the girls,
 Your Assembly Rooms and boxes on the Pre — mier — tier
 'Pon my life it's very funny,
 Not a thought about the money . . .
 Where the devil should it come from, Mrs. Smith — my — dear?

(MRS. SMITH, sarcastically)

And pray where are all your schemes,
 All your million-making dreams,
 Your subscription men, your Aldermen, your no — ble — peer?
 If of all you've let them sack
 You ever see a shilling back,
 Why I'm very much mistaken, Mr. Smith — my — dear!

I cannot remember Mr. Smith's counter to this, which is to the effect that his restless spouse seems to prefer any place to the domestic hearth, but I wish I could convey an idea of the deadly point my mother put into Mrs. Smith's final thrust — with just a suspicion of tears at the repetition of the last three lines:

(MRS. SMITH)

I don't ask, Sir, where you roam,
 But this I know, — at home
 It is very little of you that we see — or — hear!
 And where you choose to be
 Is a mystery to me . . .
 Why the fact is quite notorious, Mr. Smith — my — dear!

The concluding verse is a real duet, both singing at the same time, and all I remember of it is the eminently sensible conclusion they come to in the last line:

*So we'd better both be quiet, { Mr. } Smith — my — dear!
 { Mrs. }*

I would give anything to meet with this extraordinary English bit of music again — as English as Bishop and Sullivan, harking back far beyond the former, and yet thoroughly Victorian. Real fun.

By this time I had taken to composing chants and hymns, music being connected in my mind, in spite of the Smiths, mainly with religion — a well-known English malady. And to each of these productions the name of a “passion” was given. Our duets had now become a feature at home dinner parties, Mary having a very pretty voice and a great idea of delivery. One thing I well remember — wondering how I knew by instinct exactly where she, or other singers I accompanied, would be likely to “go flat” (for of course one interval was as easy to me as another) and what note, emphasized in time, would correct the tendency. In later years this mystery of critical intervals became clear to me.

There was one musical torture of my youth, however, from which no relief could be obtained. Maddened by a reiterated wrong note, or what my friend Lady Ponsonby once called “foolish basses,” I would cry: “I can’t do this sum if you go on playing G natural; it’s G sharp!” And Mary would calmly reply: “I *prefer* playing G natural,” and go on doing it. I consider both parties in this matter blameless and no apologies need be offered for either, but I do blame the wretched governesses, who, themselves incapable of distinguishing wrong from right notes, would tell me to mind my own business and get on with my sum.

Now, in extreme cases my mother knew very well when wrong notes were being played, but having survived many years of English drawing-room music she bore it with relative equanimity, and the rest of my world were in the same position as our governesses. Realizing which I became more and more certain that I was in a differ-

ent class, musically, to my surroundings, and that knowledge did its slow work in my heart, as subsequent events were to prove.

In some ways I think we two were precocious children, but on one subject — I speak for myself, not knowing how it was with Mary — I was very innocent. When I was about eleven, one awful day, after overhearing scraps of a conversation, or perhaps enlightened in a flash by a line of poetry, I suddenly gathered that having babies and embracing were mysteriously connected; and despair fell upon me, for shortly before I had, without enthusiasm, allowed a boy I rather hated to kiss me in the roseroy! Like every child in a large family I was aware you could not tell for a long time if a baby was on the way or not, and for two or three months I would surreptitiously examine my figure in the glass and fancy the worst. What agonizing suspense of after years can compare with that of a child thus tortured, unable to confide in anyone, and wondering as I did, should the dreaded thing happen, whether I would drown myself in the deep water near the lock, or lay my head on the rails — perhaps in the tunnel, where people would think it had been an accident! It is because the memory of that terror is as fresh to me now as if it had all happened yesterday that I am sure children ought to be more enlightened on such matters than they are. Not being a mother I fortunately need not bother my head about the best way to do it.

This was of course a case of innocent imagination run riot, but I remember another excess of imagination, in other words one of those lies children tell in order to make themselves important, which, though no harm was done, troubled my conscience for months and months. The son of one of our neighbours was supposed to be courting a pretty visitor (whom by the by he afterwards married), and one day I reported that I had seen him kiss her in the garden — a proceeding I no longer considered fraught with possible tragedy, but merely reprehensible. Every one at home was thrilled with excitement, and presently I would have given my head to confess it was an invention, but could not summon up the requisite moral courage. Such were my sufferings, however, that soon afterwards I registered a vow, if only because romancing is so

easy, to adopt a line of strict truthfulness in the future. And that line I have stuck to ever since — possibly with more zeal than discretion.

I have said that the whole course of my life was determined, little as she realized it, by one of our governesses. When I was twelve a new victim arrived who had studied music at the Leipzig Conservatorium, then in the hey-day of its reputation in England; for the first time I heard classical music and a new world opened up before me. Shortly after, a friend having given me Beethoven's Sonatas, I began studying the easier of these and walked into the new world on my own feet. Thus was my true bent suddenly revealed to me, and I then and there conceived the plan, carried out seven years later, of study at Leipzig and giving up my life to music. This intention was announced to everyone and of course no one took it seriously, but that troubled me not at all. It seemed to me a dream that I knew would come true in the fullness of time, but I was in no hurry as to the when. Alas, all my life I have paid for those seven wasted years! I want to make it clear that this was no mere passing idea such as children entertain and let go again; when I came out I was not exactly faithless but slack about it during a few months, for reasons I will explain by and by, but the decision was taken and cast in iron once and for all.

My father's Aldershot command came to an end in 1872. At that time, owing to a block in the promotion list, several old Indian officers of his seniority were given the option of retiring on a handsome pension with the rank of General; and as his family was large, and his next command probably in India, he closed with the offer, sold his Cheshire home, which was no longer in the country, and bought Frimhurst.

It was a sagacious choice of an abiding-place for an old soldier, well within reach of contemporaries still in the Army — and what I think he appreciated still more, old subalterns of his, now some way up the ladder, who simply adored him. On the stretch of heathland outside our very gates, where most sham fights began, passed, or ended, his own branch of the service could be watched, dashing up and down the heather hills — the guns at any angle you please

— over banks, ditches, and gravel pits; and not being one of those who think everything is going to the dogs since their own time, nothing interested him more than mechanical and other improvements. Last but not least, unless the wind was dead in the wrong direction, you could take Greenwich time from the nine-thirty p.m. Aldershot gun. He generally dozed a little over his *Times* after dinner, but at the faintest report would wake up, saying, "There's the gun!" pull out his watch, and glance at the clock on the chimney-piece (under which it was the most stringent rule of the establishment to put the keys, after locking up the wine or the post-bag).

The house was enlarged, the cost exceeding the estimate by a good deal — we were never allowed to know exactly how much — and a gravel lawn-tennis court was added, all too near a certain unpleasant overflow, so that when the wind was in a certain quarter there was no forgetting his celebrated theory about "a good open stink."

Being better off now we kept more horses; fences were set up in "the little field," and over these we were allowed, nay, urged by my father to lark to our hearts' content. Mary was not particularly keen on this amusement, but I remember, after she had twice fallen off, his insisting on a third attempt, and amid shouted injunctions to "sit back and give him his head," she sailed over in safety and was much praised, as indeed she deserved. A more ideal parent as regards encouraging his children to take risks cannot be imagined, and throughout the unending series of carriage accidents for which we gradually became notorious, his first, I had almost written his only, question was: "Is the horse damaged?"

He now developed an interest in the farmyard, to which the niceties of flower-gardening would have been sacrificed but for Mother, who, though she appreciated rich cream and new-laid eggs, objected to hens scratching in borders and cows rambling on lawns. There was a certain Jersey cow that gave more milk than any other two cows, but only on condition of leading an untrammelled existence; many a morning at family prayers, the reader being the only person who commanded a view of the rhododendrons, an agitated whisper of "Boy — cow!" would be addressed by Papa to the backs of the kneeling servants, upon which the page rose and stole away

on tiptoe. And presently the Lord's Prayer was punctuated by sounds of admonishment, reinforced with whacks.

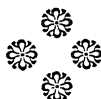
That Jersey cow was a character — what in the strange working-class slang of today would be called "chronic." Even in the depths of winter she rebelled against the cowhouse and insisted on roaming in deep snow, wrapped up in sacking. One winter she appeared in a new costume, a beautiful Aubusson carpet, by no means worn out, but which my mother had wearied of and relegated prematurely to the sheds, where it was appropriated by the cowman — not for domestic use, but for the Jersey. The pattern was all sheaves of corn and wreaths of flowers, and years afterwards we learned that the children believed the idea was to persuade the cow it was summer and induce her to yield more milk.

I fancy some of our governesses were scandalized at the vivid interest taken by the whole family in certain incidents of farmyard life. This tender-hearted cowman was a Crimean veteran of middle age, whose snow-white head was accounted for by the sympathetic legend that it had been frozen during the campaign. But as he shared the weakness of most old soldiers of his day, and as the cow-doctor was none other than the patriarch who demanded one Saturday night that the hedges should be cut back, it is not surprising that our cows often died at critical moments in their career. I remember one evening the page rushing in after dinner to say the calf was born and the cow very bad, whereupon all of us except Mother, whom nothing short of the house being on fire would drive out of doors at such an hour, flew in a body to the cowhouse. The scene was illumined by guttering lanterns held by the two experts, who, swaying backwards and forwards, were solemnly shaking their heads and murmuring in husky duet: "It is not in Our Hands." . . . Alas! it had been, and the poor cow paid the penalty. . . . And I remember a less tragic sight that probably would not astonish students of natural history as much as it did us — the baby chickens of a non-domestically minded hen cuddling up in the lower manger against the stable cat, who mothered them jealously for as long as they would let her.

To complete the list of my father's home activities as country gentleman I will only add that on off days he gave much thought to the kitchen garden, and of course insisted on the oldest peas and

beans being pulled first — a well-known madness of all green-growers (I coin this word with conviction). But occasionally my mother would upset everything by sailing into the garden and imperiously pointing out certain vegetables, and that night at dinner there would be a minor domestic scene. One feels certain that this is exactly what went on between Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Eden, if not before.

Lastly, as has been said elsewhere, it was now that he threw himself into county work, with an energy and thoroughness which has remained a tradition in that part of Surrey to this day.



CHAPTER X. 1872 and 1873

I HAVE hinted that the behaviour of Mary and myself did not always give satisfaction, one of our habits that roused disapproval being the innocent one of keeping diaries. We made rather a mystery of it, and I suppose that was the crime. At length, goaded on probably by aunts and cousins, the authorities gave a hint that the habit must be dropped, and what was worse, that the diaries might possibly be confiscated. Thereupon we decided to bury them, and I always think our choice of a cemetery was peculiar. Of course we kept rabbits, and inside the rabbit run I had constructed one of my too, too solid tables and a stool or so. Here many pages of the diaries were written, and perhaps that is the reason why one dark night we committed them to earth, cofined in a biscuit-box, in that particular place, determined to resist to the death any attempt to make us divulge the spot. We were in grim earnest about it, feeling, I think rightly, that this would be unwarrantable interference with the rights of the individual. Possibly our parents came to some such conclusion themselves or perhaps sense of humour prevailed; anyhow the diaries were left to rot in peace.

One of our elder cousins, Hugo J.'s sister, wrote and dedicated to

her godchild Mary such a charming little poem on this incident that I am delighted to find Mary still possesses it, and give it here:

*Oh Mary! Mary! quite contrary!
How does your garden grow?
Written leaves, not rotten leaves
Are beneath that sod, I know!*

*You've planted the strangest plant, I hear,
You've sown the strangest seed —
Now, will it bloom a fragrant flower
Or will it rise a weed?*

*Will those pallid leaflets ever shoot
Unfed, uncheered by you?
Or can they grow without a root?
Oh say, what can they do?*

*O tell me if those leaves will blow,
And will the fruit be fair?
And will the Spring's first gentle breath
Awake the spirit there?*

*Or will the ever-falling rains,
The balmy evening dews
Efface, instead of brightening,
Their well-known inky hues?*

*The summer zephyr could not wake
The life within those leaves,
Nor morning sun, nor noontide ray
Nor breezy dewy eyes!*

*The sunshine of thine eyes alone
Could reach that plant so rare,
Thy hand alone unfold the leaves
And read the record there!*

*Flowers from their stalk divided**Droop, fall, and fade away . . .**Diaries, from their writers parted**Must they not decay?*

Months afterwards we privately exhumed the diaries, but by that time some other craze held us in its grip and the charm was gone. For my part, disgusted by the unsavoury appearance of my heart's records, I threw them on the fire; and it is to be hoped that we both of us gave up at the same time a habit to which we were secretly addicted, of being found in becoming attitudes on sofas and in bow-windows.

Meanwhile the governess question had become a complicated one, owing to the fact that the younger members of the family were growing up and had to be educated too. A supplementary instructress was tried but it was not a success, for No. 1 considered it beneath her dignity to associate with nursery governesses, and No. 2 spent more time in weeping and retailing her grievances to her pupils than in teaching them the three R's. In despair my parents began to wonder whether Mary and I had not better be sent to school.

The idea was not readily entertained, for at that time it was not considered the thing to let your girls associate with Heaven knows whom under a strange roof. As usual, when in difficulties, my mother consulted her neighbour Mrs. Longman, whose husband, head of the great publishing firm, built and lived at Farnborough Hill (since bought by the Empress Eugénie) and whose family consisted, like ours, of six girls and two boys. This friend warmly recommended a school at Putney, kept by an old governess of theirs, which put quite a different complexion on the matter. Also, when approached by my mother, Miss D. thought well to intimate casually that among her pupils were the daughter of a Baronet and the daughters of two Honourables. Thus it came to pass — as we were told, because we were so unmanageable, but really because there was nothing else to be done — that we were packed off to school in 1872.

On the day of our departure Bob, who was then about five, re-

members us sitting side by side on a sofa in the bow-window, very erect and serious, in long black coats with broad braid, and mauve scarfs tightly tied in a huge bow under our chins, the long ends floating. It was all very solemn, and he felt sorry for us without knowing why.

At that time all we had to show for large expenditure in the schoolroom was a mere smattering of French, German, and the usual subjects, the most valuable part of our education — a part moreover which had nothing to do with governesses — being the knowledge of the Bible Anglicans acquire automatically, and a love of Shakespere — the last thanks mainly to Aunt Susan, who in her cold way had strong literary proclivities and a special devotion to Shakespere, which she passed on to Johnny. He it was who first urged me to read *Julius Cæsar* and kindled a life-long passion which has known no ups and downs. All schoolmistresses begin by addressing a remark of awful affability to new pupils, and Miss D.'s to me was: "I hear you are quite a Shakespere scholar!"

My school life is a sort of block-memory; I see few details, but of course "passions" raged all the time. There were walks in long procession of two and two; once we were led, my heart beating furiously, past the house where I knew Jenny Lind lived. From allusions to her triumphs in old volumes of *Punch*, and my mother's descriptions of her supreme art, she had long been one of my heroines, and if anyone had told me that one day I should become fairly intimate with this striking and terrifying personality I should have gone off my head on the spot. The more usual thing was vague rambles across Putney and Roehampton Commons, and I remember the pang of joy and longing that always shot through me at one particular spot, then unspoiled by villas. It was a plateau-edge where we always turned off to the left homeward — a dip in the road, the yellow of the gravel where it cut through the hill, and a blue distant expanse of happy lands where people walked at their own pace and went home when they felt inclined. Masters ("extras") came from London to teach us music, drawing, astronomy, and chemistry. I remember the chemistry classes best, because of the breathless excitement as to whether the experiments would come off; sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't, but there never was any doubt as to why schoolboys call this branch of sci-

ence "stinks." The master had one distressing peculiarity, a drop hung for ever from the tip of his red nose; we used to wonder whether constant stooping over jars of smoking chemicals makes noses insentient.

The music master was a black-bearded, spectacled little German Jew, Herr A. S., and all the busts of Pericles and other great men in my *Smaller History of Greece* were furnished with spectacles, had their beards inked, and thus became Herr A. S. By this time I undertook the music in our afternoon home services on Sundays as a matter of course, composed, and made the girls learn, chants and hymns, which bore the names of adored units in the choir — my old system — and generally imposed myself musically. Hence poor Herr A. S. thought he saw a unique opportunity for spreading his reputation as composer, and *L'Alouette*, *Le Rêve*, and all the rest of them, French names being in favour because of the success of *La Prière d'une Vierge*, were hopefully unpacked. I rather fancy it was part of his contract that parents should have a certain number of these works booked to them at face value. But I wouldn't even look at them — a fact he recalled to me with infinite good humour in after years, when, an old, asthmatic wreck in retirement, he used to struggle up from the country to hear my work performed. And indeed is it likely that one already deep in Schumann, Schubert, and Beethoven would add Herr A. S. to the list?

The whole school, except those whose parents struck at the expense, were taken up to Mr. Kuhe's yearly Grand Benefit Concert; there for the only time in my life I heard Patti, and, strange incomprehensible fact, what struck me most was her coquettish way of trotting on to the platform, followed by a display of ecstatic surprise at the plaudits that lifted the roof — an experience as common to her as the sun rising. The other day, genuinely overwhelmed by her incomparable rendering of "*Voi che sapete*" on the gramophone, it was bitter to reflect I had once heard the real woman and cannot recall the ghost of a thrill. Was it my childish contempt for florid music — she sang something by Donizetti, I think — combined with insane dislike of affectation even as innocent and ritualistic as hers, or does some spiteful god amuse himself by turning us deaf and stupid for a while? . . . We were also taken to the Royal Academy Exhibition, and again a blank in my mem-

ory occurs, to account for which no occult agency need be sought. To the National Gallery we were *not* taken, which sufficiently characterizes girls' schools of that period.

On Sundays we were marched to Putney Church, and compared our personal appearance with that of a rival school on the other side of the chancel. I think we were all in love with the cherub-faced high-born curate, less so with another clergyman, who, I fear, took more than a pastoral interest in some of the prettier members of his flock; anyhow we knew Miss D. had reasons for making sure that one of the staff should be present during his religion classes. He prepared me for Confirmation and I cordially disliked him, but the great thing that was to happen during that spring of 1873 dwarfed all thoughts of any imperfections in the agent.

I hope I have shown how full of brightness and interest our lives were; yet looking back and asking myself whether on the whole happiness or unhappiness had predominated in mine, I have no hesitation in answering, unhappiness. How should it be otherwise? If I was violent enough outwardly to be called "the stormy petrel" it was nothing to the violence within. Ambitious, wilful, torn by storms of anger, despair, and love, feeling that somehow I was of different stuff to the boys and girls I associated with, and had that in me that not even my mother, who loved me dearly and knew me so well in some ways, ever suspected, there was no one to help me into the path I afterwards found for myself with so much difficulty. I was merely considered an exceptionally naughty rebellious girl who required snubbing; no one saw anything there that merited encouragement. I had fits of religion, and like all people of a certain temperament had always been prone to incoherent, anguished prayer, after which I knew peace for a while; but these moods passed, and back rushed the old stress and misery.

Then came my Confirmation; and when the Bishop laid his hands on me — a solemn moment I remember, strange to say, more vividly than my first Communion — I believed, as young people will believe at such times as long as this earth shall endure, that now my troubles were over once and for all. And yet in a book a school friend had just given me I might have found a warning that this could not be hoped for, that if even a small modicum of one's

early fervour can be retained for ordinary working use one must be thankful.¹ And of course the inevitable happened, but the spirit of those Confirmation days never seemed to me incomprehensible and impossible to recapture as it does to some. Nor was it, for since then I have been through similar periods; none is quite like the last, but the insweeping sea is always the same — a sea that lifts and does not drown.

On one point I have never been able to see clearly. My *Imitation* is deeply scored in chapters such as the ones on "Inordinate Affections" or "Private Love hindereth most from the Chiefest Good," and when I came to know Greek art I instantly understood that excess and perfection are enemies; yet on the other hand this world and the million worlds around us live by fire . . . ! There is a mental movement H. B. called "going back to your top"; if you propound to a child a problem beyond his intelligence, he will stare at you for a moment and quietly go on with his game. After meditating the subject of passion versus balance I always go back to my top with a sense of peculiar relief. . . .

In connection with this part of my school life I must mention one absurd incident that assumed for me the proportions of a tragedy at the time. Three days after my Confirmation the most adored of all my school friends, a very religious girl, extremely High Church like myself and with a face like a sheep, met my old aversion Lord Radstock at a garden party, and a week later became a Plymouth Sister! . . . Instinctively I felt that this dreadful conversion was not unconnected with the fact that Lord Radstock was probably the first peer she had ever met in her life, and down toppled the idol from her pedestal. I was at heart a little snob myself in those days and may have done her injustice . . . but — I fancy not!

On the whole Mary and I agree that we learned a good deal at Miss D.'s, but I still think among the most important things were being taught how to darn stockings, and how to put clean linen back in the drawers — that is, at the bottom of the pile — a principle I insisted on when I came to have a house of my own. As for darning, it is more than needlework; it is bridge-building, it is house-building (for thus you lath and plaster a ceiling), it is gardening

¹ *Imitation of Christ*, Part iii, Chapter viii.

(for thus you make something grow where there was nothing). In short it has the charm of all jobs that begin with the formula: "take a hole." But I never do it if I can help it.

Memories of home life now assumed a passionate aspect of course, and on this theme we wrote words to a tune then in vogue — a tune so jolly and shapely that I think it must be by Offenbach. This song became a great feature in our repertory, and the last verse, "to be sung slowly and sadly," ran:

*But soon we shall return
To that horrible Mango Chutnee
We eat with mutton cold
In our school which is at Putney . . .
Oh dear! Oh dear!
Let's shed a silent tear!*

*Chorus (at a cheerful pace)
But hurrah, hurrah, our lessons are past!
Hurrah, hurrah for freedom at last!
Hurrah, hurrah, though time flies fast
We'll make of it all we can!*

Let me say chutnee was not dragged in unlawfully; we really did have it twice a week, and that it happens to rhyme with Putney is a dispensation.

Our school books, many of which I still have, are scored with home souvenirs. Before we were exiled we had made hot friends with a young soldier, Walter Lindsay by name, whose regiment, a very smart one we were glad to think, was under canvas on the Chobham Ridges. He was really a dear fellow, as the fact of his preferring to all other company that of a couple of children proves, and I have a huge atlas on the blank sheets of which are no fewer than fifteen portraits of our hero as viewed by my adoring eyes. He was very good-looking, but his nose was certainly too long for the canons of perfect beauty . . . and young artists do not mince matters. Years and years after, I met him again — still very good-looking and father of one of the most beautiful girls in London — and of course told him about the atlas, which so delighted him that I promised to do him tracings of some of the portraits. But when I

produced them a grave look passed over his face, and I realized with secret amusement that he was upset at his nose having assumed such proportions even in the eyes of a child! . . . Truly vanity is not a feminine monopoly.

At this period Mary and I were much given to writing poetry, and I still possess a collection of my plays and verses. Anything more totally devoid of talent cannot be imagined; there is but little sense of rhythm in the verse, the funny poems are dreadfully arch, and the serious ones insufferably sententious and commonplace. In my case this phase started before I went to school, in an effusion which I overheard a misguided relation say was "remarkable," and which celebrated a phenomenon that really *was* remarkable — Northern Lights of unexampled brilliancy. If only as a warning to other young poets with indulgent and uncritical relations, here it is:

THE AURORA BOREALIS

*I have seen the bright heavens in many an aspect
When sparkling in starlight and beaming with light,
But I never have seen it so gloriously brilliant
As when the Aurora is shining at night.*

*I have watched its faint ray growing stronger and stronger,
Until its rich crimson is lighting the sky,
I have watched it grow fainter and fainter each moment
Until it has faded to darkness on high.*

*We must think, when we see this great work of our Maker,
What poor feeble creatures we are in His sight,
For who under Heaven could make the Aurora
To shine like the day in the midst of the night? . . .*

.

*It is meant to remind us of God our Creator,
To show us our weakness compared to His might!*

(I myself thought this tacking on of two extra lines rather good.)

The poems of the Putney period show some slight improvement; there are a few verses on "Confirmation" which are really sincere

and not unmusical; I expect they were more than directly inspired by *The Christian Year*. I had not re-met this poem when I wrote about my Confirmation, and am interested to see there is no reference to the Holy Communion, and that the best verse begins:

*When the Bishop now is laying
His hands upon us, praying . . .*

— the sort of incident which gives a memoir-writer confidence. Most of the other effusions, whether in comic vein, lampooning our masters and mistresses, or darkly tragic, are in the cantering metre of the “Aurora Borealis”; perhaps this was the influence of Byron, whom I greatly admired, or possibly it was an inheritance of Bonne-maman and her “Gipsy King.” But there was one case that evidently nothing but blank verse could meet.

UNREQUITED LOVE

(A Fragment)

*And thus we stake our lives on one great love,
And thus our hopes are shattered when we find
That earthly love hath Summer, and a Spring . . .
Alas that Love should have a Winter too! . . .
I staked my all upon the raft of Love
And peacefully it floated down Life's stream.
But then Life's river is a changing stream;
Sometimes 'tis rapid, sometimes slowly winds
Through pastures green, with flowers dipping in
Their blushing faces when the noonday sun
Waxes too strong. Sometimes through mountain gorge
It tears and foams, rending the trees and bushes,
Waking a thousand echoes in the rocks . . .*

*My raft was floating onward peaceably —
It struck upon a rock — a crash — it sank! —
O cruel rock! for now my heart is torn
From all it held the dearest upon earth . . .
She cares not for my love . . . and so I mourn
In Solitude!*

Sometimes I wonder if, in a future state, what artists look on as their matured masterpieces will strike them as the above "poems" strike their author today.

This literary phase of ours resulted in one incident more ludicrous even than our own productions. During one summer holidays Fred Longman, a cultured nephew of our neighbour's, lent us a periodical in which was what he, and of course we, considered a wonderful poem. The subject was a priest's love-affair and it seemed to us the last word of tragic passion. Mary and I at once copied it out, but somehow or other the matter came to the ears of our elders. Mr. Longman, appealed to as an incontestable authority, pronounced the verdict — I remember his exact words — that the thing was "revolting in thought and disgusting in expression," and profuse apologies were tendered for his nephew's indiscretion. Foreseeing that we should be called upon to destroy our copies, we actually spent the whole of a stormy night committing the poem to memory, aided by flashes of lightning which illumined the doomed manuscripts — whether because this seemed the most suitable illumination or because we had no candle, I am unable to say. Thus it is possible to summon the first stanza from the shades of oblivion.

*I was a priest and I should not love her,
I was a man and my love was hers!
Turn it and turn it from cover to cover,
The book of my soul no more avers
In my deed's defence than this one thing;
That Love held my will in his fierce hot hand,
And swayed it, and shook it, and tore it asunder
As your tropic earthquake tears the land,
As your lightning leaps with his voice of thunder
To smite the trees which were green in Spring,
And grind the spires of granite to sand!*

[In those days the possessive pronoun before earthquake and lightning puzzled me; "why *your*?" I asked myself. And nowadays, having grasped the rhetorical nature of that pronoun, I ask, still more insistently: "Why *your*?" . . .]

To return to the priest. Passing from generalities to facts, he now tells us that "oft when the organ did grumble and groan for the puny human fingers that vexed it" (I thought that bit wonderful), he would invoke "the forms and faces of women that dwell in the seats whence the poor young angels fell." Of these he remarks "a body each had, but Heaven unsexed it," and needless to say such anæmic visions had no chance against flesh-and-blood realities like "my lady with rich warm lips, and love in her face and finger tips, and great grey eyes that looked out from afar, and the great arched neck, made, sure, for caressing" (these must have been the passages Mr. Longman had in mind when he used the term "disgusting in expression," for I cannot recall anything more ardent). And so this tragic affair went on, accompanied by "the moan of the selfish sea, its moan as up to the moon it strove," until, after a good deal of perfunctory prayer on the beach, the moment came when "in the small poor hall of her father's house" he "felt and knew that the Fate did come and the Curse did fall." I have forgotten some of the middle part, though as I write, details come back to me that tend to further justify Mr. Longman; but I well remember the last stanzas, in which grave doubts as to the future are expressed, the hero going so far as to ask himself: "Where Love did reign shall Despair and Hate blacken us both for the Hell below?" Nevertheless the prospect leaves him undaunted, and his last words are pitched in an heroic key to which Mary and I did ample justice, chanting out the final couplet in loud exultant *unisono*:

*Yet I feel no fears for the vengeful years,
But lift up my face to defy them all!*

When I reflect how often the thought of this whole incident has made me laugh, I bless the mental effort that engraved a few hundred lines of inflated rubbish into the brains of two silly schoolgirls.

CHAPTER XI. 1873-75

IN the course of periodical returns to the scene of our past school-room activities, one thing impressed itself strongly on our minds. We had always been given to understand that the everlasting rum-puses and governess crises were owing to our peculiar temperaments and general unmanageableness; but it was obvious that exactly the same thing was going on now, also that the class of instructress had not changed since our day. But though we had had some queer specimens to deal with, Mary and I never achieved anything to compete with the queen of the children's series — a lady who wore stockings woven in black and white rings, and remarked it would be madness for anyone whose legs were short of perfect symmetry to venture on that pattern. "I may tell you," she added, "that when I was young, gentlemen used to ask me to walk up ladders so that they might look at my ankles." The bewitching ankles were still exhibited to any large four-legged animal she might meet, before whom, catching up her petticoats, she would fly like the wind. On such occasions she was not above negotiation, a fact taken advantage of by her pupils, who would lead her innocently through a field in which, as they knew, one or other of the horses had been turned out. Paddy had a way of galloping after passers-by with his mouth wide open, which, though meant in the friendliest spirit, had such an effect on Miss Gobell's nerves that she would bribe them with the promise of a half-holiday to take her home by some other route. In fact, our successors were exactly the same heartless young brutes that we had been ourselves.

Judging by its repercussion in the schoolroom, I think the drama must have been on the up-grade in those days; certainly the children's performances struck me as more vivid and realistic than ours ever were. I well recall one particular charade acted on the landing outside the schoolroom. For the whole word a huge target was to be displayed, and it was the province of a little neighbour of ours (a child of excessive temperament), armed with a rifle, cap and all complete, to fire home the point. When the time came, however, overpowered by excitement she forgot to fire, and running amuck

amongst the audience prodded right and left with her weapon, screaming "Bull's-eye! bull's-eye!" The success of this unexpected finale may be imagined, but remembering what I have gone through myself on the operatic scene, owing to points of stage-management being missed or bungled, I warmly sympathize with the fury of Miss Grace Pain's fellow actors. I remember, too, one bit of dialogue that brought the house down, for the whole establishment, especially the men servants, heard it a least once a week in real life:

SCENE: *The Drawing-room*

PAPA: Where are the keys?

MAMA: Under the clock.

PAPA: They're *not* under the clock.

MAMA: But they must be; I put them there myself.

PAPA: I tell you they're not there. When did you have them last?

MAMA: After luncheon of course, when Violet locked up the wine. It was *bitterly* cold in the dining-room because you always *will* tell David not to pile up the coals, and I remember going *straight* to the fireplace after lunch, and putting the keys under the clock before I settled down to *try and get warm again* —

PAPA: Well then someone has taken them away and not put them back. If people go meddling with the keys and don't put them back, how the devil — (*fumbles in his trouser pockets*). Why, bless my soul! I had them in my pocket all the time!

I may add that the children got up these things by themselves, the help of their elders being neither asked for nor required.

During these short respites from Putney, Mary and I pursued pleasure with the avidity of people who know there is a term set to it, and I am reminded that our neighbours, whose houses were a fortune to us in holiday time, have not yet been spoken of as fully as they deserve.

Like the Longmans, most of them came under the usual heading — peaceful, normal people, nations without a history; but there were certain others with whom I rather wonder we were allowed to associate so freely. I suppose our parents had acquired with years an easy-going, take-things-as-you-find-them philosophy, such as befits

people not very well off, who have large families keen on enjoying themselves.

One neighbouring establishment was really fantastic; an immensely fat, clever lady of the house, rumoured to have been a nursery governess in early youth; a husband generally absent on journeys connected with some unspecified business, who was said to be addicted to drink; and an aged father stowed away in an annex, who was taken by my father, on the occasion of a first visit, to be the gardener and sworn at for not opening a gate quick enough. There were many children, including two schoolboys in love with Mary and me respectively (though needless to say Mary eventually mopped up both) and a daughter, of an age to be "such a nice friend for Alice." Further there was a Mr. Y—, "our dear old friend Y.," whose resemblance to one of the boys was so remarkable as to dumbfounder casual callers. But above all there was a handsome old peer in Holy Orders, with a flowing grey beard and the grand manner, who may be said to have constituted a regular part of this curious household. Charitable neighbours would point to the fact that his invalid wife was also in the house, but as she was kept hidden in a side wing and seldom if ever seen, whereas he and his hostess drove out together daily, bulging right and left over the sides of a tiny victoria, scandal continued to simmer. At some Christmas festivity to which Johnny and Maunsell B— were invited, the rarely present master of the house was reported to have burst into tears and invited anyone who dared breathe a word against his dear wife to come out on to the lawn and fight him. He was gently conducted to his bedroom by the peer, and everyone tacitly agreed to go on as if nothing had happened. We frequently played mixed cricket with the family, and it was pointed out that the rector, who liked a glass of good port, always ate his Sunday dinner at that hospitable board.

Another distant neighbour was a well-known old Whig, supposed to have stood in his youth for the figure of Barney Newcome; but that I cannot believe, for though an egoist and a terrible snob, he had qualities that Barney had not, being witty, well-read, kindly, and what my father called rather an old rip. With his fluffy white hair and coal-black eyebrows, his passionate love of poetry, his eighteenth-century nonchalance and cynicism, his extreme good nature

and worldliness, he was even then a figure belonging to the past. Statesmen and members of the great world would now and again pass the week-end with him, and knowing that the best receipt for keeping young is to mingle with youth, he would be at some trouble to secure the presence of neighbouring young girls.

The subsequent happenings were standardized; he would invite you into the library to look at the bindings of some new books; and then an arm would steal round your waist, and various pinchings and squeezings, graduated according to the receptivity of his companion, had to be endured. Even the most recalcitrant, such as I, were begged to "give an old man a kiss," and it is strange he did not guess with what repulsion one met those old, cold lips. What could we do? He had tried his best to give us a good time, and we felt this was the only return we could make; but it was extremely horrible, and I often wonder how far he went with more facile subjects than myself. Once he gave me a sovereign — not, be it remarked, for favours received — and when I hesitated to accept it he said: "My dear, take an old man's advice, never refuse a good offer." I thought the advice sound and have followed it ever since. It appears that when his hour struck, this old heathen made a beautiful and well-mannered end, apologizing to his nurse, like Charles II, for being such an unconscionable time dying.

Now, my parents knew all about these two households but never dreamed of preventing our going there. I cannot say how entirely I approve this tacit recognition of the truth that it takes all sorts to make a world; and as in the country you can't pick and choose, better let your children find their own way about. If I had a family of my own I would bring them up on the same lines.

In the country, what are nominally children's parties are often besprinkled with grown-ups, and if only for that reason Mary and I were not above attending many such in our Christmas holidays. Mary was now an extremely pretty girl with a natural taste for flirtation, and the eternal trouble was that, being two years older than I, she had a better chance — even if other things were equal, which they were not — of securing grown-up partners, the secret ambition of every child in the room. As a matter of fact they swarmed round her. Once at a dance at the Longmans', I the surefooted one, the

athlete of the family, suffered the anguish and humiliation of slipping up on the paraquet floor and coming down on all fours beside my partner (only a boy of course), whose head nearly cracked the boards. Later on, Mary, who was eating an ice, and being ministered to by a nephew of Mrs. Longman's, Edward Bray (a very good-looking Oxonian, with romantic grey eyes), said to me airily over her shoulder: "You must have knocked at least fifty off your price." If ever murder was in anyone's heart it was in mine at that moment!

I had recently performed a rather bold feat. There was a big drain in our grounds, about two feet in diameter, that carried off the rain-water from the wood into the canal, and, the season being dry, I had entered this drain from the canal side and crawled right through it — some thirty yards perhaps — pushing the unwilling dog in front of me as a precaution against mephitic gases, and bribing Violet with fourpence to follow close in my wake. One day when I was bragging, as not infrequently happened, of my pluck, Mary casually remarked that she had told Edward Bray about it, and all he said was: "Pah! how disgusting!" . . . Slowly I realized he had mistaken the nature of the drain! . . . This was the sort of thing that would make me murmur to myself in the silent watches of the night: "I wish I was dead — I wish I was dead!" . . .

Despite this grey-eyed Oxonian and many other fervent admirers, Mary was not unmindful of earlier ties. Maunsell B., still Johnny's great friend, now considered himself seriously, though secretly, engaged to her — much to the agitation of his mother, who saw what was going on and, though a great friend of our mother, had no intention of letting her darling and only son marry a girl without money. Meanwhile Mrs. B. was far away, and Mary on the sofa beside him, where they would sit in the dusk and ask for soft music. Being, as I said, favourable to love-affairs in general, I met their views, and am glad to believe gave satisfaction, the first movement of the "Moonlight Sonata" being considered especially sustaining to the emotions. Whoever else did not appreciate my music, those two certainly did.

During one of our summer holidays I myself was favoured for the first time with amatory speeches from a grown-up, though in rather a public manner, for they were bawled from the branches of a big

apple tree whereon grew the ruddiest apples I ever saw, and which was no distance from the dining-room windows. The climber, one Colonel McIvor, was a total stranger to all of us except my mother, into whose life he had leaped with one chivalrous bound, dragging her, so to speak, from beneath the wheels of a Paris omnibus. One can imagine how this romantic incident appealed to her imagination, how he was pressed to look us up in England, and arrived one day, just in time for luncheon, on a short visit.

He described himself as a "real soldier of fortune, one who has fought for lost causes all over the world," and had with him a collection of "grandeurs," in the shape of foreign orders, which my father wholly failed to identify. If the publicity of his declaration, which took place soon after luncheon, was rather disconcerting, I supposed these were open-hearted ways acquired under warmer skies than ours and was flattered on the whole. But as the day went on, his tales of adventure by field and flood became more and more incoherent, so much so that after dinner a strong hint was given him by my father to leave next morning by an early train, which he did. We afterwards found out he had proposed to both Alice and Mary, and according to her account had made improper advances to the children's governess; so I ceased boasting of my conquest.

Colonel McIvor was far from being our only improvised visitor, for my mother, bored with English humdrumness and attracted by all things foreign, would sometimes catch at very queer straws that floated past her in Homberg or Wildbad waters. For instance there was a certain Madame de S., a Belgian, who I dimly felt, even then, after a certain conversation, was not quite in her place in the bosom of an English family; she also was more or less bundled out of the house. Cultivated, well-dressed, with perfect manners, I have sometimes wondered since whether she was perhaps a white-slave agent.

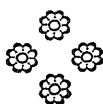
At length came a day to which I had always looked forward with dread; Mary, who was now of an age to come out, left Miss D.'s for ever. I was miserable without her, and grateful for being allowed eventually to leave school before my own time was up, poor Nina being sent to work off the prepaid terms in my place. Once home I made Mother give me lessons in Italian, which delighted us both, for she was a capital teacher; also I went in for a Cambridge Local

Examination and was plucked owing to grievous incapacity for doing sums. Johnny, who had been kind and interested, was really distressed at my failure, but Cousin Hugo wrote a mock consolatory letter about my now being entitled to write M.A. after my name — that is, Mulled in Arithmetic — a joke I didn't think at all funny.

It was in the summer of 1875 — a summer that in any case was to rob her of her favourite daughter — that the great sorrow of my mother's life happened. Alice had been engaged for some time to a young Scotsman, Harry Davidson, and the couple were waiting for an impending improvement in his prospects, when Mary, who had been out but a short time, also became engaged — not to Maunsell B. but to Charlie Hunter, brother of a school friend of hers. There was to be a joint wedding in July, and the invitations, of which I had mercifully kept a list, had been sent out, when it became evident that Johnny's slow martyrdom, endured by him with marvellous fortitude and sweetness, was coming to an end. For a fortnight he had suffered from terrible headaches, as usual making no complaint, and one night at dessert, taking up a biscuit, he said: "How queer, I can't read the letters on this biscuit." He then sank back, as we thought fainting, but a tumour on the brain had burst, and he became unconscious by slow degrees, his last conscious words being: "Don't let this illness of mine stop the girls' weddings."

We used to take it in turn to watch nightly beside his bed, and when relieved spent the rest of the night on a sofa in the hall close by, so as to be ready if needed. One night, after my watch was over, I stumbled and fell, and there I was found when the housemaid came in the morning to open the shutters, asleep on the floor . . . as I had fallen. Such is the sleep hunger of youth. There had just been time to cancel the invitations, but as it seemed that he might linger for some time yet, the marriages took place one morning at Frimley Church, none of the family but myself being present. The bridegrooms went back to London from the church door, and a few days afterwards Johnny died. That afternoon the children had been sent to a kind neighbour, and Nelly says that on their return Mother met them at the front door to tell them he was dead, tears streaming down her face, yet trying to smile — a picture of grief that has remained with them ever since.

This was my first acquaintance with death, and the sight of that strange unfamiliar face impressed me terribly and painfully. The day after the funeral the married couples departed, and I became the eldest at home.



CHAPTER XII. 1875 and 1876

ALL this time, whether at home or at school, the main determination of my life, though sometimes obscured, had never wavered; it was like a *basso ostinato*, which, as subsequent counterpoint studies showed me, will sometimes be shifted to a less obvious position in the midst of other voices and seem to the eye of ignorance to have vanished. I certainly trifled with other ideas, such as marriage, travel, becoming a Roman Catholic, or even a nun. This last seems fantastic now, but after my Confirmation I held, as I do still, only in quite another sense, that only one thing matters, one's relation to God. And if so, how about obedience to parents? My father would never let me go abroad willingly, if only for reasons of economy, and I quite grasped that making an allowance to a married daughter, whose future is no longer your business, is quite another thing than financing a maiden's sterile whims. In his mind's eye he would see me, no doubt, returned on his hands a failure and knocking too late at doors in the marriage market; meanwhile his income was none too large to keep the home going. After all, in the religious life there would be scope for limitless passion — a belief that I imagine induces many conversions — and Thomas à Kempis had given me a foretaste of the ecstasy of renunciation. In one of these moods I set to music and dedicated to a latest "passion," a very religious woman whose name was Louisa Lady Sitwell, a long piece of sacred poetry. I wish I could look at that MS. now, but no doubt it went into her wastepaper basket more than forty years ago, and now she is dead.

A less sympathetic phase was Social Ambition. I had read memoirs about Lady So-and-So governing the world from her political salon,

and used to spend hours studying the Peerage and settling which duke's eldest son was to give me the position I was so well fitted to adorn. It became a mania for the time, and as we knew no dukes and had no footing whatever in the great world, implied, but for its piteous snobbishness, a great amount of imaginative energy. I think it must have been in a departing spasm of that craze that, in answer to "What is your greatest desire?" I wrote in someone's Confession Book: "To be made a Peeress in my own Right because of Music!" Of course this matrimonial scheming was really a sort of game, like taking a Continental Bradshaw and atlas and planning journeys round the world; but I don't think it was a nice game, and nothing but a firm intention to speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth in these pages makes me record the Social Ambition phase.

The point is that these temporary crazes blinked into sight to vanish again, and back came the *basso ostinato* more *ostinato* than ever — as I would take pains, by some casual remark, to let my father know; whereupon he would angrily rustle his *Times* and mutter something about "damned nonsense!" As for my mother, though she was by way of backing him up, I thought she was secretly on my side.

I always count the arrival of that governess who played classical music to me when I was twelve as the first milestone on my road; suddenly, when I was least looking for anything dramatic, the second milestone loomed into vision — to my great excitement we learned that the composer of *Jerusalem the Golden*, a Mr. Ewing, in the Army Service Corps, who had married one of the Gattys, in fact "Aunt Judy" herself, was stationed at Aldershot! Even my father, who hadn't an ounce of music in his composition, may have been moved by the news, for that hymn tune, in which there is a sort of groping ecstasy confined in "Ancient and Modern" fetters, was considered almost as integral a part of the Church Service as one of the Collects. For my part I took it on trust that at last I was to meet, not a poor musical hack like Herr A. S., but a real musician. And I was right, besides which Mr. Ewing turned out to be one of the most delightful, original, and whimsical personalities in the world.

Mrs. Ewing and my mother were attached to each other at once

and eventually became great friends. Meanwhile she took the whole adoring family to her heart, bade us call her "Aunt Judy," wrote us all the most delightful letters, and it is a great source of pride to us that the fair and donkey-riding incidents in her delightful story *Jackanapes* were suggested by Bob's adventures at our own Frimley Fair. Her lustre was slightly dimmed by a tendency to enjoy bad health; I think she really was not strong, but as her father once exclaimed, according to his son-in-law: "Dear Juliana is always *better, thank you*, but never *quite well*." I found a packet of charming letters of hers to Mother, written in the most beautiful hand imaginable, which are half spoiled by constant references to her poor back, her wretched head, the air-cushions people lent her, the number of hours spent on the sofa after each journey, and so on.

She was devoted to the other sex, more especially to officers in the Royal Engineers, then supposed to have the monopoly of brains in the British Army, and had discreet, semi-intellectual, and wholly blameless flirtations with two or three of these at a time. I did not quite approve of this — possibly from jealousy, for needless to say she at once became the ruling "passion." As for her husband, he of course demanded to hear me play and be shown my compositions, after which he proclaimed to our little world that I was a born musician and must at once be educated.

My father was furious; he personally disliked my new friend, as he did all people not true to the English type, and foresaw that the Leipzig idea would now be endorsed warmly by one who knew. The last straw was when Mr. Ewing proposed that he himself should begin by teaching me harmony; but on this point my mother, urged on by Aunt Judy, who had great respect for her husband's judgment, came over definitely into my camp. So it was settled that twice a week I was to drive myself over to Aldershot and submit my exercises to his inspection.

These expeditions were the delight of my life. The Ewings lived in one of the wooden huts of which in those days the whole camp, with the exception of the barracks, was constituted. They were stifling in summer and bitterly cold in winter, but full of charm. Some had gardens, and luckily the Ewings' was one of these, for both were gardeners and dog-lovers. I always brought her flowers from Frimhurst, picking with my own hand those she loved best,

and generally laid siege to her heart. At one moment I must have apologized for "gush" — for in one of her letters she writes: "One word, my dear child, about 'gush.' I think a habit of gush, like a habit of pious talk, without being necessarily absolutely insincere is very objectionable and both make me feel awkward to the last degree. But few people are weaker than I am as regards the luxury of being loved, and *pace* the physiologists and psychologists, I like a little divine fire both in affairs of the heart and of the soul." Well, she got it as far as I was concerned; but though she delighted in and had positive genius for young people, I fancy my ardent devotion gratified her less than the respectful homage of the R.E.'s.

I used to arrive at eleven and have harmony instruction till luncheon; besides this my teacher analysed my compositions, and I felt how capital his criticism was, and how pithily expressed. His real instrument was the organ, but with fingers ill-adapted to piano-playing, aided by a very harsh cracked voice, he banged and bellowed his way through the scenes of *Lohengrin* and *The Flying Dutchman*, and otherwise introduced me to Wagner. And very definitely I remember that Beethoven appealed to me more than Wagner or anyone else; nevertheless I was bitten by the operatic form of Art — a taste that was to be squashed for the time in Leipzig later on — and wrote in yet another Confession Book that my "greatest desire" was to have an opera of mine played in Germany before I was forty — an ambition fated to be realized. I still have, and really educated myself on, a copy of Berlioz orchestration Mr. Ewing gave me; it is full of characteristic marginal notes and ejaculations by the giver, and is a book I often look into from sheer delight in its style.

After luncheon Mrs. Ewing would good-naturedly correct and comment on the English of little articles I wrote for some obscure parish magazine, declaring she could turn me into a writer by and by; but I much preferred playing with the dogs and talking to their owners while they gardened.

Meanwhile my father's dislike of "that fellow," as he called him, became fanatical. With all his geniality he could be extremely forbidding in manner to people he disapproved of, and had a way of looking at them without seeing them, his moustache raised in a slight snarl, that was worse than deliberate rudeness. The sight of even a

civilian untidy about the hair, necktie, and feet, irritated him, and — Mr. Ewing was an officer! Fortunately he never saw him in uniform, for difficult as it is to achieve, my friend managed to look even more slovenly in uniform than in plain clothes.

But the worst was Papa's persistent misreading of his moral character. He must have known that bad digestions often cause red noses, but in this case it was ascribed to Scotch whisky; and, most infuriating of all, artists being in his opinion "loose fish," he put his own construction on my mentor's sentiment for me, which, though very warm and keen, was devoid of the slightest trace of lovemaking. Nor were matters improved by his learning from innocent Aunt Judy herself that her husband was a successful mesmerist — a talent cultivated exclusively, I fancy, in the interest of his wife's ailments, but one can imagine how its possession endeared him to the father of an impressionable daughter! Knowing nothing whatever about what goes on in an artist's soul, he had no satisfactory clue to the ardour of our alliance, besides which, as I noticed once or twice in after life, unable to sway me himself, he resented my being under the influence of any other man. In short nothing but his reverence for Aunt Judy and her own unflinching tact and charm staved off disaster for the time being.

But it came at last! I have always had a bad habit of strewing my room with correspondence, and one of Papa's amiable weaknesses was a tendency, as my mother put it, to "go poking about one's writing-table." On one of these occasions he found a certain letter from Mr. Ewing¹ — a charming one, but hardly pleasant reading for parents and guardians! The result was such a terrific storm that the harmony lessons, which in any case were running to a close, the Ewings being under orders to leave Aldershot shortly, came to an abrupt end.

My chief gain in this companionship was of course the immense quickening of my musical life generally, and the comfort of at last feeling "the breath of kindred plumes about my feet." I always think of my first musician friend with amusement, tenderness, and also great sadness, for if ever nature fashioned an artist it was this man, condemned by fate to live and die a drudge in the Army Service Corps.

¹ Appendix I (D), p. 129, No. 9.

It was during the Ewing epoch that, invited to stay with the O'H.'s, I paid a first and certainly memorable visit to Ireland. My host, more amazing than ever, was evidently considered a character even in his own country, but what I chiefly remember is riding a good deal with his daughter, who, as we know, had "a prettier seat on horseback than any other girl in Ireland." As a matter of fact she had a beautiful figure, which swayed easily to the canter of a thoroughbred *that was never allowed to trot*; and as I scornfully wrote home, under these circumstances it is not difficult to present a graceful appearance in the saddle! I even advanced with great caution some such theory to her father, who replied with lightning rapidity that no woman ever born *could* trot, and that he would shoot any female belonging to him who made that sort of Judy of herself.

His gentle wife was of the opinion that if I raised my little finger I could make an excellent match out there with a certain young squire, adding: "You must remember, my dear, your poor father has still got four girls on his hands" — a remark I rather resented from the mother of one, for in those spacious days the Psalmist's view of the full quiver obtained, and we were proud of our large family. I replied I was not going to marry, having other views. This renders still more surprising the adventure that befell me on my homeward journey.

On the way out I had been chaperoned across the water by a delightful, exceedingly Irish friend of ours, wife of the great soldier who afterwards became Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, and was to rejoin her at the house of her brother-in-law, Lord Fitzgerald, at Bray. There I met a young barrister, Mr. William Wilde, with whom I played tennis, and also discussed poetry, the arts, and more particularly philosophy, in remoter parts of the garden. I saw at once he was very clever, and after dinner found he was so musical as actually to put ends of his own to Chopin's *Études*, for which, later on, I might have chopped off his fingers with the lid of the piano; but I then thought it quite wonderful and was glad to find this young man, of whom that great lawyer my host thought highly, was going to England next day in our boat.

We boarded her after dinner, and Willie Wilde, as they all called him, pointed out to me a tall figure clad in dark blue, leaning over

the bulwarks and gazing seaward, as "my brother the poet." It was the great Oscar, who was at once introduced, and on whom it afterwards appeared, according to his brother, I had the good fortune to make a favourable impression. But as he was as yet unknown outside Oxford the fact left me unthrilled.

The night was glorious, a full moon and no wind, and I was surprised that Mrs. Wood at once retired to her cabin, for on the outward journey the sea had been like a mill-pond and I thought the Irish Channel a much maligned piece of water. Willie Wilde produced rugs and he and I sat on deck discussing — Auguste Comte! Presently I began to dislike the way the mast moved slowly to and fro across the face of the moon, and must have made some remark to that effect, for my companion flew off to fetch some brandy which he said would put everything right. The next moment I was staggering on his arm to the ladies' cabin, and before the stewardess could intervene, to quote our old friend the enamoured priest, "the Fate did come and the Curse did fall." Willie Wilde retired hurriedly, but I was past caring who had seen what.

The next thing I remember is the train at Holyhead and a long carriage with berths for men at one end and for women at the other, between the two a sort of loose-box with one seat in it like a small guard's van. Mrs. Wood, the most easy-going chaperon I ever met, who herself had been very seasick all night, vanished into the ladies' territory, while Willie Wilde and I ensconced ourselves in the loose-box, he sitting on a Huntley and Palmer's biscuit-tin at my feet. And there, in spite of what had happened on the boat, he seized my hand and began an impassioned declaration, in the middle of which the biscuit-tin collapsed. This mishap, which surely would have thrown an Englishman out of his stride, he passed over with some remark I have forgotten, though not its Irish gaiety, and resumed his tale of passion; and before the train steamed into Euston I was engaged to a man I was no more in love with than I was with the engine-driver!

At Euston were were met by Major Wood, who adored his wife, and were hustled across to the hotel, my lover being of course of the party. Trains were few and far between in those days, so we decided to tidy up and stay there for some hours before proceeding to Waterloo, it being understood that the Woods had letters to look



Juliana Horatia Ewing ("Aunt Judy"), 1876

through and momentous matters concerning a new appointment to discuss. They breakfasted in their own room and we two in the coffee-room, and when I ran upstairs to ask if I might go off with Willie Wilde to see some old houses (really to buy a ring) impatient voices from behind the locked door answered in duet: "Yes, yes, go by all means." Finally I arrived at Frimhurst with a gold band ending in two clasped hands on whichever was the correct finger, and for once wearing gloves, my *fiancé* having requested that the affair be kept secret for the present.

On reflection I found this did not meet my views; averse to secrecy at all times, where was the fun of pulling off an engagement before you are out if no one is to be any the wiser? And then — the love-letters began to arrive! Now although to propose to a girl five hours after you have seen her being seasick is a proof, as I said to myself, of true love, and though to go on proposing after your seat has given way beneath you argues not only passion but sense of humour, undefeatedness, and other admirable qualities, the fact remains that I had accepted this young man from flattered vanity, light-heartedness, adventurousness, anything you please except love. Consequently the letters, which I have since reread, and which are really very like the genuine thing, rapidly put me off; nor did I like his gentle but continued insistence on the article of silence. In short before three weeks were over, probably to his secret relief, I had broken off the engagement, adding that I would like to keep the ring as a souvenir! And keep it I did, until a year or two afterwards, when I lost it while separating two dogs who were fighting in deep snow in the heather. Thus ended my first and last engagement, the hero of which I never saw again — a pity, for they say he became even a better talker than his brother.

Soon after this adventure, the Ewings having meanwhile left Aldershot, I came out, but cannot remember what my then frame of mind was. I had never dreamed of putting through my musical plans till I should be really grown up — that would have been too unreasonable — nor, as I said, did there seem any need for special hurry. So I suppose I thought it well to take a look at the world of real balls and other festivities for which I was now qualified.

On the whole it did not come up to expectations. I loved, and

still love, that soundest form of entertainment, dining out; not only from greediness and pleasant curiosity as to what you are about to receive, but because of the mingling of old and young, the talk and laughter, and the gradual warming up of the atmosphere under the influence of good cheer. After dinner I was always asked to sing at once, and as I took care that no one else should get at the piano the musical torture was eliminated.

But the balls! — oh, the long drives in a tight white satin bodice, and the entreaties to sit and not crumple your skirt! My mother always said, too, that towards the middle of the evening my head arrangements suggested a Bacchante or a Cherokee chief, and would waylay me in corridors and tea-rooms, with hairpins plucked from her own head — as a mother bird in the interests of her offspring tears feathers from her breast. Little gratitude and much impatience were her reward. But the dancing itself was the greatest trial. I loved dancing with a delirious “I wish I could die” passion, especially when the music appealed to me — and just then a man who called himself “Waldteufel,” no doubt an Austrian, was writing beautiful waltzes — but alas! only one in ten partners had any notion of time, and what made it worse, the nine were always behind, never before the beat. Then it was that I would hear a pretentious, fraudulent, utterly idiotic phrase which I hope is no longer current in ball-rooms: “I generally dance half-time” (!). Sometimes I would firmly seize smaller, lighter partners by the scuff of the neck, so to speak, and whirl them along in the way they should go, but I saw they were not enjoying themselves, and oddly enough I wanted these wretches to like dancing with me.

Another thing; years had not yet purged me of snobbishness, and I noticed that the “smart” young men, being I suppose above such considerations, were the worst time-keepers of all; so that if I did not wish to be driven frantic I must dance with the cads. And on the way home my father would suddenly ask from his corner of the carriage: “Who was that nasty-looking fellow you were dancing with so much?” (He always pronounced his a’s in north-country fashion, as in the word “cap,” which made the adjective still more damaging.) Since then I have come to the conclusion that the best sort of Englishman we breed nowadays, however it may have been in Shakespere’s time, is “the man that hath not music in his soul,” or

indeed artistic proclivities of any kind. There are exceptions of course, such as my dear Mr. Ewing and others I could name, but I fear the rule holds good.

Nor were these the only drawbacks; if I went to a ball it was to dance, and for no other reason, but I soon found out this is a very incomplete theory of balls. Being a self-sufficing person, who didn't want to cling or be clung to except in the way of dancing, what was I doing in this ante-chamber of matrimony, the ball-room? It was the old trouble cropping up again of knowing that between my world and me a gulf was fixed, that I was a wolf in sheep's clothing, in fact a fraud. Talent for flirtation I had none — that wants another temperament, not passionate but either light or sensual — and my attempts were amateurish and half-hearted, like the childish love-affairs with schoolboys. Then too there was the humiliating infuriating idea that if I was "nice" to a man he would think I wanted to marry him! Notwithstanding these disabilities, being young and not ugly I did pull off one or two little flirtations, or rather had an admirer here and there whom I fear I encouraged with a view to starting a "proposal list." But nothing much resulted.

There was, however, one passing moment of sentimental weakness, and consequent unfaithfulness to my big purpose, which must be recorded. I had a friend, not a "passion" for once but a clever well-read woman, whose brother I fancied myself in love with. I mention her because on one or two other occasions I had the same illusion respecting near relations of women friends and explain it thus: the sun I revolved round illumined another body which, in defiance of such astronomical knowledge as I possessed, was taken for another fiery globe instead of merely a dead moon. It is not fair however to speak thus of my young man as I thought him then, for besides being extraordinarily good-looking in the style I most admired — fair with blue eyes — he was anything but a fool, and one of the smartest officers in a celebrated cavalry regiment.

Whether he did, or did not, deliberately trifle with my young affections I cannot say, but when one day at a ball at East Horseley Towers he asked me to come into the conservatory as he had something to tell me before his regiment left Aldershot, I had no doubt as to what was coming, and if he had proposed to me think I should have accepted him, though the affair would certainly have ended

as did the bogus engagement to Willie Wilde. What happened however was that he took from his breast pocket the likeness of a perfectly lovely girl to whom he said he was going to propose next week! . . . This was rather a shock, but I kept a stiff upper lip and wished him luck. If I was unhappy about it, all I can say is, it has left no trace in my memory. He married the girl, had a most miserable and tragic life with her, and afterwards was supposed to have shot himself by accident on a big-game expedition, but no one really believed it was an accident.

This ghost of a love-affair was my last glance back from the plough, and the fight for freedom was soon to begin in grim earnest.



CHAPTER XIII. 1876 and 1877

IN spite of these social perturbations, for I won't quite call them pleasures, music ran her course more or less fitfully. One day I went with the Ewings to a Wagner concert, and was introduced to her brother, Alfred Scott Gatty, the successful song-writer, who, knowing his brother-in-law's soaring spirit, entreated me above all things *not to aim high*; "it's not the slightest use," he added, and I rather think he was speaking seriously. Wagner, who was almost unknown in England, had rashly contracted for a series of concerts conducted by himself, which I afterwards heard were a failure financially. My party were all hard up, and we sat so far away from the platform that all I saw was an undersized man with a huge head, apparently in a towering rage from start to finish of the concert; I thought he could hardly refrain from whacking heads right and left instead of merely the desk. No doubt the performance was insufficiently rehearsed and execrable; anyhow I was not as much carried away as I expected.

As yet though there had been a great deal of simmering I was not in open disgrace with my father; he used even to do unexpected kind little things. For instance Aunt Susan had given me prints of

some of my favourite pictures in the National Gallery — Bellini's Doge was one — and suddenly he told me to get them framed and put it down to him; perhaps he wished to rub in that there are blameless forms of art-devotion. Two things, my love of riding and a growing interest in politics, threw a frail bridge of sympathy between us at times, and shortly before the crisis he presented me with a filly he had bred, and let me break her, which amused me and saved him expense. I schooled her regularly over the home fences, and as I was allowed to ride out alone — the least troublesome form of locomotion for the stable hands — I used to lark her surreptitiously over neighbours' hedges. There is a field near Cove, now full of aircraft sheds, where I once lay in a ditch, the filly on top of me, for quite ten minutes before I could wriggle myself free.

I did a certain amount of country-house visiting. To be inspected on coming out by the head of my mother's family, Sir William Stracey, was a ceremony that ranked only second to presentation at Court, and I recollect that on the way down to Rackheath I got a bit of coal dust into my eye and arrived with it bunged up. As usual there was no weak display of pity, only extreme irritation on my mother's part at such a thing happening "just when I wanted you to look your best for Uncle Harry." The Straceys of that generation were the most musical family I ever met in England, and I remember saying naïvely to my cousin Diana: "Why, you're almost as musical as me!"

Another visit that left an impression was one paid with my father to his life-long friend Mr. Staniforth of Windermere, an immensely rich old Quaker of purest breed, who wore a broad-brimmed beaver hat, had never crossed the sea, and nevertheless was a tremendous power in the county. He was greatly entertained at learning that my luggage consisted of eight hats, no extra boots, and no nightgown, I having packed for myself; also at my addressing from his house a tremendous letter to the *Times* about "English Apathy as regards Wagner." I had already translated two or three articles from Schumann's delightful *Music and Musicians* for *Macmillan's Magazine*, and hopes had been held out that further translations would be favourably considered; hence I was surprised and disgusted to receive a polite intimation that my letter would not appear in the columns of the *Times*.

Of course too there were visits to the married sisters. While staying with Alice and Harry Davidson in Edinburgh I wrote the ballad *Schön Rothraut*, with which I was soon to sing myself into musical circles at Leipzig — also went to balls, and was entranced by what I had never seen before, reels danced in costume and to perfection. On the way home I stayed with Mary and Charlie Hunter in Northumberland, going out hunting on the only animal that could be raised for me — a huge heavy horse that drew old Mr. Hunter's coal-cart, and was supposed never to have jumped a fence in its life. On that day it got over or through a good many — one could hardly call it jumping — and I enjoyed myself immensely. But all the time the conviction grew and grew that nothing was any good save one thing, and that go to Leipzig I must.

Occasionally, though very rarely, I went to a concert in London, being met at Waterloo and convoyed to St. James's Hall by some approved friend, or perhaps by Aunt Susan's maid, and on one occasion was actually presented to Frau Schumann and her daughters. This great event was engineered by a friend of mine, Mrs. George Schwabe, of whom more will be related presently, whose mother-in-law — another personality who will reappear in these pages — was an old friend of Frau Schumann's. The extraordinary thing is that in the wealth of impressions I was to gain in after life of that wonderful woman, all recollections of our first meeting have faded, but I gather from a remark in one of Mr. Ewing's letters that she gave my musical aspirations her blessing. She could do no less!

Soon after I struck what may rank as a half-milestone in my journey; for the first time I heard Brahms. The occasion was a Saturday Popular Concert at which the *Liebeslieder Walzer* were sung by four persons, three of whom (the Germans) knew the composer personally and afterwards became factors in my life. They were Fräuleins Friedländer and Redeker, Mr. Shakespere, and George Henschel. That day I saw the whole Brahms; other bigger and, to use the language of pedants, more important works of his were to kindle fresh fires later on, but his genius possessed me then and there in a flash. I went home with a definite resolution in my heart. . . .

That night there was a discussion at dinner as to which drawing-room I had better be presented at. Suddenly I announced it was useless to present me at all, since I intended to go to Leipzig, even if I had to run away from home, and starve when I got there. . . .

I almost despair of anyone believing today, so quickly has the world moved since then, what such a step stood for in my father's mind. We knew no artists, and to him the word simply meant people who are out to break the Ten Commandments. It is no exaggeration to say that the life I proposed to lead seemed to him equivalent to going on the streets; hence the strange phrase he hurled at me, harking back in his fury to the language of Webster's or Congreve's outraged fathers: "I would sooner see you under the sod."

After a period of vain efforts to overcome his resistance, which became so terrific that it was no longer possible to broach the subject at all, I quite deliberately adopted the methods used years afterwards in political warfare by other women, who, having plumbed the depths of masculine prejudice, came to see this was the only road to victory. I not only unfurled the red flag, but determined to make life at home so intolerable that they would have to let me go for their own sakes. (I say "they," but here again I felt that, whatever my mother might say in public, she was secretly with me.) In those days no decent girls travelled alone, third class and omnibuses were things unheard of in our world, and I had no money; but I would slip away across the fields to Farnborough Station, travel third to London, and proceed by omnibus to any concert I fancied. The money difficulty was met by borrowing five shillings from tradesmen we dealt with on the Green, or the postman, "to be put down to the General." In order to be close to Joachim and his companions I would stand for hours in the queue at St. James's Hall, and ah! the revelation of hearing Schubert's A Minor Quartet! . . . All my life his music has been perhaps nearer to my heart than any other — that crystal stream welling and welling for ever. . . .

From my place I used to watch George Eliot and her husband sitting together in the stalls like two elderly love-birds, and was irri-

tated by Lewes's habit of beating time on her arm with his *pince-nez*. There is a well-known syncopated passage in Beethoven's Quartet, Op. 132, and I noted with scornful amusement how the eyeglass, after a moment of hesitation, would begin marking the wrong beat, again hover uncertainly, and presently resume the right one with triumphant emphasis as if nothing had happened. All this George Eliot took as calmly as if she were the Sphinx, and Lewes an Arab brushing flies off her massive flanks.

The greatest excitement was one day when with beating heart I forced my way past Mr. Chappell's Cerberus into the artists' room — a place more sacredly awful to me than the Holy of Holies can ever have been to a young Levite — and made the acquaintance of Fräuleins Friedländer and Redeker, expressed to them my admiration of their singing, and fell madly in love with Redeker, whose rendering of that divine love-song: *Wie bist du meine Königin* had all but torn the heart out of my body. They were goodnaturedly touched by such enthusiasm and begged me to come and see them some morning, which I did, climbing up stairs upon stairs to the room they shared. It was at eleven a.m., they were in *déshabillé*, the beds unmade, and they were sipping port out of an egg-cup. This unaccustomed sight gave me rather a shock, and for a moment I thought of my father, but supposed it was just part of the artist life; and indeed a few months later such a spectacle would have made no more impression on me than did Mr. Lewes's eyeglass on George Eliot.

My financial arrangements with the tradesmen came out of course, as they were meant to, and to my father's ragings I stubbornly replied: "You won't let me go to Leipzig so of course I have to go to London to hear music." From this moment he became convinced that, freed from control, I should squander money right and left, and one of the stock phrases was: "We shall have to sell your mother's diamonds" — a calamity that ranked in our minds with expedients such as debasing the coinage. But in this phrase I thought I saw a weakening of will; he was actually considering possible consequences of surrender! . . .

I had a few friends who backed me up more or less openly and were consequently looked on with disfavour at home. To this rule Barbara Hamley, now Lady Ernle, proved an exception, contriving

in a miraculous manner to be my friend and yet keep on excellent terms with the parents, who delighted in her. She effected this miracle by a blend of tact, reasonableness, and sense of humour that must have oiled many locks in her course through life; moreover, but for her sympathy with the Frimhurst rebel, she was a perfectly normal, model young lady, who kept house with great success for her adored and adoring uncle Sir Edward Hamley, then Commandant of the Staff College (one of whose sympathetic traits was a great admiration for my mother). Thus she was in a favourable situation for operations, and her championship of me included a useful element — full comprehension of my father's point of view.

Not so that of Mrs. George Schwabe, daughter of Lord Justice James, a clever, hard-riding, whist-playing, particularly cherished friend of mine, who as radical, and one justly suspected of unorthodox views on religion, naturally considered this opposition to my German plans ridiculous and out of date. So too did Mrs. Napier, wife of her first cousin General William Napier (the historian's son), who was then in command — or rather Mrs. Napier was in command — at Sandhurst. This delightful champion of mine had rebel blood in her own veins, her father, fierce eagle-eyed Sir Charles Napier, whom his daughter was as like as two peas, having eloped with her mother, a Greek. It goes without saying that these two friends of mine were constant subjects of strife, and if my mother, jealous by nature, was especially so in these cases, who can wonder? It was all very well for Mrs. Napier to say right and left: "Of course dear little Ethel must go to Leipzig" — to say it even to my parents themselves, which she did, for she came of a fearless stock. *She* was not my mother, *she* had not to endure daily scenes with my father — scenes which became more frequent and furious as time went on. For towards the end I struck altogether, refused to go to church, refused to sing at our dinner-parties, refused to go out riding, refused to speak to anyone, and one day my father's boot all but penetrated a panel of my locked bedroom door! . . .

There was nothing for it but to capitulate! Fräulein Friedländer was able, by some miracle, to produce adequate testimony to the respectability of her aunt, Frau Professor Heimbach, who lived at Leipzig and would certainly be willing to take me under her wing

till her very own mother had a room at my disposal; the terms suggested confirmed Mary Schwabe's reports as to the cheapness of life in Germany; my father named the maximum of allowance he could make me; it was pronounced to be sufficient, with care; and finally, on July 26, 1877, under the charge of Harry Davidson, who knew Germany well, I was packed off, on trial and in deep disgrace, but too madly happy to mind about that, to the haven of my seven years' longing.

APPENDIX I

[A]

*From Amelia Opie to My Grandmother, on the Occasion
of My Father's Engagement to My Mother*

[NOTE. — I give this letter chiefly because of the tribute to Bonnema-man; also because I like to think that Mrs. Opie, by that time immersed in good works, nevertheless took pleasure in alluding to her former brilliant career in the world of fashion.]

Castle Meadow: March 12, 1848.

My dear Friend, — Captain Smyth's engagement to the young lady whose lovely mother I met at General Lafayette's in Paris some years ago, was an agreeable surprise to me, and I heartily congratulate you all on so desirable an event. Obligated as he will be some months hence to return to his duties in India, I rejoice to learn that the pain he may feel in leaving those other duties which he so well and affectionately fulfilled at home will be mitigated by the consciousness that he carries with him to his *distant* home such a charming and accomplished companion as, I am told, the bride is.

My cough and cold are really better to-day and I hope to be at the Deanery on the evening of the 15th of this month and meet thy daughter there.

With kindest regards to thee and thy family,

I am thy sympathizer and sincere friend,

AMELIA OPIE.

[B]

From S. D. (A Schoolboy Admirer, aged thirteen)

[NOTE. — S. D. was the son of country neighbours of ours. His great obsession was to be "gentlemanly" — an ambition which somewhat tempers the ardours of his thirteen years; nevertheless our relations, though tender, seem to have lacked the repose characteristic of the type he aimed at. It will be noticed that the references to Mary grow more and more insistent, and as No. 8 is the last letter of the series, I imagine that soon after it was written the usual transfer of affection took place.]

(1)

My very dearest Ethel, — I beg and beseech you not to be angry with me for not writing before, but I do assure you on my word of *honour* that I have not a bit of time in this beastly place to write letters, not *even* to *you*. I took your sentence and read it over again several times, and when I found out what it meant I was *very glad*. Hurrah, hurrah, the holidays are soon coming and then *won't* we have a lark? Why I declare it will be as good as donkey riding to see you skating away as gracefully as a swallow skims the earth, doing the outside and inside edge which I hear you do *splendidly*. I mean to learn and skate and then *perhaps* I may have the long looked-for pleasure and honour of skating with *you*. I hope you have quite forgiven me for my ungentlemanly conduct, but I assure you I did not mean to be haughty and grand, in fact it never entered into my mind. I have another thing to ask, if Mary has quite forgiven me for getting her into such a scrape and *not getting her out of it*.

With the old usual fond love I remain ever

Your most devoted *loving* friend *for ever*,
S.

(2)

My dearest Ethel, — I must say I was greatly offended, but however there is an old saying "all's well that ends well" and as you have greatly *improved* my *temper* I have quite forgotten it. Please do not say anything more about the locket, it was hardly worth giving to *you* and you know I hate flattery, but then of course I don't mind it from *you*. How is that *dear darling* BEAST R. S.? I hope very ill. If you go to see the Mater will you give my poor old dog a kiss from me, and tell Mary to give Jack's dog Sailor one. I know Brin will not bite *you*, because, like his master, he is *very particular*. . . .

(3)

. . . Have you been riding that *happy* donkey again, and have you been up in the Royal Ethel¹ again? Do you remember our seat at the top? Oh those happy rides even on donkeys!! Jack has gone back to Harrow. I forgot to tell you one of the R— girls is in love

¹ An oak tree.

with him but of course he does not return it as *his views are somewhere else!!!* . . .

I will wear the *ring always* for your own *dear* sake. . . .

(4)

. . . I hope you don't think I was rude that evening in not paying you any attention; it was because you were painting and I thought you would not care to talk. Now I am going to ask you a serious question, but think it *well* over before you reply; and that is have you forgiven me enough to ride with me in the holidays, not on donkeys but on ponies? Because I am going to ask the Governor to borrow that pony again for me, as he is better than nothing and goes splendidly with spurs. *Mind you think before you answer.*

In case you should hear of it I daresay you will wonder why I do not wear the ring, but *that* is *far* too precious to wear at school: why, the fellows would have it off and break it in a very short time. Was it not odd the other day when some of the fellows were telling us ghost stories that one of them should tell the one *you* told me in that *dear darling* oak tree where I have spent some of the happiest hours of my life about?

With the fondest love *possible*, I remain ever my very dearest Ethel your *most loving* friend for *ever*.

S.

P.S. — The scratchings out are only mistakes.

(5)

. . . Now that we are friends again I must tell you something I was *not quite* honest about, that is I *lost* the ring, but still I thought I would not tell you just then but wait and see if I would not find it: imagine my *delight* and *joy* when I found it lying on the washing-stand, where it must have been lying several days, and now it is looking as pretty as ever on my finger, with the white stone upwards. I am in such spirits about finding the ring that I have been jumping about, and have just fallen off my chair: of course that is not the only reason; the great reason is that *sweet* letter from you. . . .

I am sorry to hear Mary and Neaner have colds: colds are such horrible things are they not? . . . I heard Alice looked charming,

but I should think she felt rather nervous when she was making her bow. I should like to see you at your first Drawing Room: you would not feel nervous, would you? nor would Mary I should think. . . . I hope you saw your name in Sheldrake's paper. I am pleased to hear he told the truth for once, because of course you played *beautifully* as you always do, because you couldn't help it. . . . Remember me kindly to Mary. I dare not send my love because old Jack *would be angry*. . . .

(6)

Dearest Ethel, — A million thanks for your *charming* note: it seems a year since I saw you last; not that I shall ever forget the happiest days I ever spent in my life, which were at Frimhurst! oh it was a jolly time was it not? I am going with the J's to see a cricket match between Harrow and Aldershot. I expect we shall get an awful licking (I mean Harrow) as they have got the weakest eleven that ever was known; at least I should think so. But then you see they make up for it by football, which they can lick any school Colledge or university at in the world. . . . We are going to the W's which is about nine miles off Frimley, and as he has a pony perhaps we shall be able to have what I have *so long* wished for, a pony ride together. . . . It is all humbug about my liking the youngest Miss J. I only did it to chaff you, only I am afraid I have offended you. Knowing your SWEET temper I know you will forgive me because I am *awfully* sorry about it.

Your loving friend,

S.

(7)

. . . I am riding such a beautiful cob; people say he does his 18 miles in the hour. I thought of you and how you would enjoy it. I do wish I could come over and see your *darling* self, but you see people won't lend their ponies to do 26 miles, for its 13 from here at least. . . . Please, as old Jack is not there, give my love to Mary if I may venture to send it. . . .

(8)

My dearest Ethel, — I daresay you wondered why I did not keep my promise in coming to see you, but the Governor made us come

up to London or you may be sure I should not have missed the pleasure of seeing you. . . . I went to a Pantomime last night and enjoyed it as much as I could without you being there. . . . I am longing for the pleasure of seeing you, once more only. I brought the little squirrel up here with me, he is just as tame as ever and hops about like a child. . . .

Please write to me if you can spare the time. I must not ask Mary to write or dear old Jack may not like it. . . .

[C]

From My Mother

[NOTE. — *These early letters of my mother's are included mainly because she was my mother. Letters were not her medium, partly owing to a rheumatic thumb which often made writing a painful effort. Still, given her turn of mind, it is amazing to find her passing on square roots as a matter of course, and I think too that the conflict of preoccupations in the Confirmation letters will appeal to other mamas.*]

(1)

(Before our Confirmation)

1873.

My darling Ettie, — Your letter interested and pleased me more than I can express. God bless you, my two darling girls, and may He make this time the turning point in your lives. What a charming person Mr. — must be! You must tell him I often think of him with a grateful heart for his kind interest in my children.

Your confirmation dresses are in course of progress and will be, I hope, just what they ought to be. I hope your old prints still fit. There are two very pretty ones making for each of you, one pink and the other blue.

We dined at the Burrells on Friday and met besides the Rectory party that nice little Mrs. Herries and a Captain and Mrs. Hitchcock from the Staff College. Emily looked and was charming; she spoke so nicely and affectionately of you both. She was in her black and yellow. Her friend Miss Mortimer looked very pretty, but was wonderfully dressed, like a jockey, in a pale yellow silk with long sleeves, a tight blue satin bodice *sleeveless*, and blue satin skirt, and

blue satin stripes *across* the yellow sleeves; a very tight yellow silk skirt and very bunchy blue satin panier — one blue and one yellow feather in her hair!!

We are all going to the Staff College ball on Tuesday and to the State Ball on Wednesday, for which Alice has a very pretty new blue Balldress.

You heard what a favorable verdict the doctor gave about Johnny on Wednesday. They say there is not the slightest doubt of his recovery and that his health is much improved; going to Mr. Fry does him a great deal of good and makes him exert himself so much more. . . .

And now my darlings goodbye,

Ever your fond Mother,

NINA SMYTH.

(2)

1873.

My darling Child, — I fully intend D. V. being present with Alice at your Confirmation, and if possible remaining over Sunday to take the Eucharist with you, as we do not start for Germany till Tuesday 3rd. *Have you white gloves?* I will send the *shawls*, veils, and all complete with the dresses, and new Jaconet petticoats to wear with them. The hats and velvet shall be sent with the new prints. I have some difficulty in matching the grey for the skirts for the new Spring dresses but shall succeed in time. Meanwhile you might wear your *red* one on *cold* Sundays and your *green* petticoats with the grey on *bright* Sundays. . . .

I will telegraph when we are to arrive.

Ever your fond Mother,

N. SMYTH.

(3)

April 23!! Ethel's Birthday!

Many many happy returns of the day my darling and may you be stronger in health by your next birthday and be the dear good girl to us *this* year that you have been all *last*. . . . How tiresome about the cape! I cannot understand it. Are you sure putting the band a little lower will not do? The people have sent you so many things

they must know you are not a little girl, but if it really is too small send it back with a note giving your height. . . .

The Keatings will lend you a guitar to see how you like it first and then we can buy one. God bless you my darling child, and may He watch over you and keep you in the right path.

Your fond Mother.

P.S. — I highly approve of your trying for the Cambridge Local Examination.

(4)

Frimhurst: July 1874.

Ettie darling, — It is indeed delightful about dear Alice and we are all very happy about it — he is such an excellent dear fellow and so clever and amusing; he will be a charming ingredient in our family circle. I will send the box by Papa who is taking Johnny up to Emma Arkwright's for a week to be under Hutton — I do so pray he may do him good. . . .

Johnny says he has got your letter this morning: the square root of $7\frac{1}{2}$ is 2.738612 etc. He couldn't quite make out whether the second number was 1650 or 1.650. The square root of the former number is 41.21326 etc., of the latter 1.284523 etc. I enclose a paper that will shew you how he did it.

We are all looking forward so much to your coming home, my darling. . . . I do not write more to-day as I have been quite laid up with rheumatism all down my side, and cannot go to the Fitz-Roy's Garden Party to-morrow, but dear Mrs. Longman will chaperone the girls. God bless you my child,

Your loving Mother.

(5)

July 1874.

My darling Child, — I am so glad your chest is better; I think you had better not give up painting, dear, unless it makes the pain worse, as it is a sedentary employment without much exertion of the mind, and therefore a relaxation. . . .

It appears that when Hutton saw Johnny first he thought worse of his hip than of anything else, but when he had examined the spine 6 or 7 times he put his finger on a particular place and said:

"this is the seat of the mischief" and after ordering his back to be fomented for two hours he returned, and after considerable manipulation all at once Reid and Papa heard a sort of click, and Hutton said "there! it has now gone back to its place"; but then he worked the arm about a good deal which gave poor Johnny exquisite pain and exhausted him terribly. He says Johnny must return to him in a month. . . . Everyone is so hopeful! When poor F. L. consulted Hutton he told him he could do nothing for him, and when he saw Johnny he said he could make a cure of him. May it please the Almighty in His mercy to restore our darling to health! . . .

(6)

Frimhurst.

My darling Ettie, — You see Johnny has taken up your Exam. Papers and of his own accord said he should like to help you, which is a very good thing for you both. . . . We all went yesterday to see some games given by the Highland Brigade. While the "tug-of-war" between the Artillery and the 42nd was going on, it was great fun to see Papa crouching down, leaning on his umbrella, shouting and encouraging the Artillery who ought to have won, but one man slipped up and was disabled. . . .

I think the affair between Captain — and Miss — will certainly come off after all; I have done my best. . . . The guitar shall, *I promise*, be returned to-day. It had been put up in your room, so being out of sight was, I fear, out of mind. . . .

(7)

Frimhurst: January 1875.

Mon enfant chérie, — Au contraire je suis très contente de ta bonne petite lettre, il n'y avait aucune faute de grammaire, ou d'orthographe, mais de tems en tems une erreur de tournure de phrase. Mais ceci ne peut s'acquérir qu'avec une grande habitude de parler ou d'écrire, et même c'est étonnant que tu t'exprimes si bien, ayant si peu l'occasion de parler. . . . Mais, ma petite, il faut absolument que tu reviennes Lundi prochain. Mary doit s'en à Trelydon, et Alice en a encore pour trois semaines de sa *cuisine* à Londres, et nous ne pouvons rester sans fille du tout à la maison, en ayant 3! . . . Dis mille choses gracieuses et aimables de ma

part à Mme. Bourne, en la remerciant de tout cœur pour toute sa bonté à ton égard. . . .

(8)

[Written after Johnny's death, while on a first visit to Alice's home. I was staying with Mary and Charlie.]

Muirhouse, Davidson's Mains, Midlothian: Autumn '75. Ettie darling, — Mind you wrap up well for your trip here on Monday — put on a long-sleeved jersey as it's very cold here. Alice says she fears you'll find it dull, but I don't for a moment, for there's always someone in the house and they're passionately fond of music and understand about it. Then there are always Jeux d'Esprit going on, versifying themes, etc. Mr. Davidson is the jolliest most cheery old man in the world, reads everything so well, from Shakespeare to a comic song, and they are so warm and kind and affectionate in their manner, not a bit stiff or formal as I thought they would be. As for dear Harry, all his faults are *manner*, but he is really very dear in his own house, so very thoughtful and considerate. Alice has such an interminable cold that Mr. Davidson, who just worships her, calls her "Madame Catarrh." . . .

I shall leave my ermine muff and collarette behind here for you. Tell them at Corbridge not to let anyone come and meet me; it must be a trouble as I know they are all busy now, more or less, and I am old and ugly enough to take care of Bob and myself.

God bless you dear. I wish I could have had a peep at you.

Love to all who like it.

Your loving Mother.

P.S. — I am rather nervous about my Mary. I hope she has not been leaping about too much.

[D]

*From Alexander Ewing, Esq., A.S.C.
(Composer of Jerusalem the Golden)*

[NOTE. — Mr. Ewing's letters will hardly interest any but musicians, except perhaps No. 8 — a vivid description of a Rubinstein recital — and the last two letters of farewell from the master, who had missed his vo-

cation, to the pupil about to take up her own. No. 9 is the letter which, surreptitiously read by my father, brought my harmony instruction to an abrupt end.]

(1)

January 17, 1876.

Dear Miss Smyth, — I am so much obliged to you for the music which you have sent (and for the most brilliant of notes!). I think the little Kirchner things are quite of the right sort.

The large class of our fellow creatures whom you so aptly depict in two words, what do they do with the above phrase? When they hear the D don't they think the performer has hit a wrong note? (I knew one of them once — a so-called "Great Musician" too — who described Bach's fugues as "those things that sound as if they were all wrong.")

No. 2 is very fresh and bright. I "nod my head" at it as well as them, tho' perhaps for other reasons.

No. 3 would scarce have existed but for Schumann; it dreams prettily.

No. 4. Very Schumannesque.

No. 5. A gem, not like anybody else. I think might be a genuine "popular ballad" of some northern race, dark, true and tender.

No. 6. Most charming. Like (for one thing) a young dryad dancing alone in a forest glade (I can't help it if this seems absurd).

No. 7. Very new. It says something several times, with great distinctness, but as yet I have not gathered what.

No. 8. I think almost too sketchy except the end; and

No. 9 seems almost perfect.

I was careful to form all these impressions without looking again at what you had said, and now I see you do not always quite agree with them.

"Dodelinette" is nice and pretty, and the last pages evidently quite like the clock with the weak heart (or mainspring).

I send you volume 1 of Schumann's "Gesammelte Schriften." I have little doubt you will like it, and if so, there is another volume, when you want it. You must pardon its tattered condition, also my most reprehensible habit of scoring passages which strike me at particular moments violently with pencil marks, etc.

I also send you one of Liszt's most recent things. What would those who take such pains to call spades agricultural implements say to some of his chords and progressions? Please picture to yourself the effect of the orchestration as well as you can, and don't miss where the trumpets and trombones come crashing and blazing in *ff.* at the passage — "The Archangel Michael . . . FLAMES . . . from every window!"

I am,

Very truly yours,

ALEXANDER EWING.

We are very sorry you are not to be at the theatricals.

I hope you admire the way my parcels are sealed. A clerk did it.

(2)

Aldershot: March 8, 1876.

. . . I think haste is what you have to guard against at present. It must be that only which makes you mistake chords and omit characteristic intervals.

You know (please think of it now, oh Sturm and Drang!) there is no hurry!

Pardon my preaching and

Believe me (in haste), etc.

(3)

March 11 (?), 1876.

. . . I yesterday went to St. James's Hall to hear Brahms's Sestett, which some say is his very best work as yet. It was perfectly divine; a real Master-work, quite fit to stand alongside the greatest men's productions. Schumann was not wrong when, among the last things he said, before the dark clouds veiled him as he "set" on earth, he prophesied Brahms's greatness.

You are very good to have got up the Alto clef. I should like you, as soon as you can, now, to get accustomed to the Soprano one — and then you will have done (in fact you have already done) what not every "great" amateur musician has.

You know that expression "a great musician," and what (in the

mouths of the *canaille*) it implies? I like to see their faces, when, on making acquaintance with one, they say, by way of being pleasant and polite, "You are a great musician are you not?"

"That I certainly am *not*," is what I generally imply in so many words — and it is then that they look funny. . . .

(4)

Aldershot: March 14, 1876.

. . . As I go on really studying music properly, I feel it more and more hateful to do anything else. I feel sure I shall take to it altogether some day. Meanwhile one must go on "making wings for flight" as Goethe says somewhere; and then, when they are ready, hey! for the upper ether.

We have a concert on Monday, I think it will be pretty good. If you please we are going to produce R. Wagner, no less! The Wedding Chorus from Lohengrin! What think ye of that? . . .

(5)

(?) 1876.

. . . I am sending you the programme of yesterday, that you may look at the motifs of Brahms's Sestett — though that will give you no idea of the divine manner in which they are worked up. I am glad to know that one may write at present; I did not know it when I wrote the former sheet — ('Twere well, however, to consign the present page at once to cremation, were it not?) . . .

You once asked if I could draw. I can't, but you will find, on page 1160 of the programme book, a sketch of George Eliot which I did yesterday as she sat in the Concert Room. It really is like her. Lewes is a very repulsive creature — and two ladies (with brains) who were with me shrieked at him worse than I. He "noddled his empty head" (I don't forget your hits!) wherever the music was lightest and shallowest. During a scherzo, for instance; it went like a mandarin's in a tea-shop window. I am far from meaning that it is empty except as regards music, for I think some of his writing most able — but the head that noddles at a scherzo must be empty of that. G. Eliot sits and gazes, as if afar, with a great rough powerful face. She goes to all these St. J. Hall Concerts, and I should think,

and hope, 'twas a real comfort to her great soul (for a Lewes cannot be, that I am sure of) and she is worked harder than any cart-horse.² . . .

What an awful day! I think Spring is behind this gale. I long for her!

(6)

(?) 1876.

. . . Not knowing whether you have seen Blackwood for May, I just transcribe you, as a sister translator, this specimen of the English tongue written by a Leipzig student thereof.

"The Calmness of Charles XII

"The King was in his cabin dictating a letter to his Secretary. A bomb fell on the house and got through the roof. The Secretary turned his confounded looks to the King. 'Well,' said the King, 'what do you have then? why let you fall your pen?'

"'Oh, sire, the bomb.' 'Well,' said the King, 'which reference has that with the letter I dictate in this moment?' and he continued dictating with the greatest coldbloodedness."

Nothing much more delightful in its line has met my gaze for long.

(7)

(?) 1876.

. . . I heard Madame Schumann yesterday play unsurpassably, Nos. 2, 5, 4 and 8 of her husband's Kreisleriana. The Concert Room was thronged to the roof, and contained Royalty in the front row. She is in great form, quite recovered apparently. It is a thing altogether unparalleled in its way to hear her play his things. It is quite as if he were in the midst of us (as doubtless he is). When one thinks of all their story, and looks at her, surviving still to interpret him to us, there is a something quite *sui generis* about it all.

A pupil of hers whom I know has told me, that she used, some years since, to "feel" it a lot that he was not more widely known,

² As we know now, Lewes was, on the contrary, George Eliot's greatest comfort.

and consequently worshipped in this country. The fullness of time has brought it about, and she has lived to see it, that he is about the best and most widely beloved of all the writers; as witness the gathering of yesterday to do honour to her and to him. . . .

(8)

May 3, 1876.

My dear Miss Smyth, — Here followeth some account of Rubinstein's first recital.

We had made special arrangements of our classes at the Academy to admit of our going to this one; so, when pianoforte class was over, Franklin Taylor and I started off together, and I swept him at my usual rapid pace down Regent Street, being anxious not to lose one of the great man's notes. (He can't keep up like you!) We were in time, however; his stall was not near mine, and we separated. But I was right in the centre of a constellation of friends (I may term them so — I look on them as a kind of friend, tho' they know me not; I owe them all thanks for many a happiness, and they belong to our race) la Krebs (only four people intervening between us), Mr. Manns, with his strange weird face, and his brilliant eyes, and Sir Julius Benedict. Many a time in the course of the day I read the same things in their faces that I felt within me.

Krebs, when in repose, sitting listening to another, not playing herself, is very much more thoughtful looking than as we see her at the instrument — a very refined type of face it seemed, and a nice speaking voice. I heard her talking to her friend as we came out, in first-rate English. I believe we should like her.

The great Maestro came on, punctually to his time.

A strange looking being. At first sight he loomed broad and uncouth. I am glad to find he is much younger than I expected — I should think he is barely my age, but it's not easy to say what his age is. His hair is à la Henry Holmes, but much more so. It is about as wild as Beethoven's. I suppose it may be brushed sometimes, but I should think not as often as it might.

General effect at the first glance, something like a Bear out of the woods. Gave a slight — very slight — bend of his head, sat down, and commenced instantaneously a prelude of Bach's, no music before him, of course, from beginning to end. This bend of his seemed

markedly *dédaigneux*, and that I thought right. The last time he was here the people jeered at him.

He was set down to play a prelude and fugue of Bach's, but he did play two preludes and fugues (I quite forget which they were).

I thought to myself, "Is he going to be a disappointment?" I have heard others play Bach just as well as he did — Bülow, Krebs, etc. There was a wondrous power of finger-touch in rapid passages, but that was the only thing at all remarkable about this.

Scarcely taking breath after them, he commenced a slow movement of Mozart, with a rondo after it. Immediately we were in a new world — a world of grace, fairy lightness, and pure, childlike, innocent beauty.

More men than one, you see, evidently, under this bear's hide. The most refined woman could not have been more womanly refined than he was here — and yet there was a man's power veiled behind it. La Krebs and I were both fetched by this performance, and, as by one consent, led off a burst of applause of it. Still he scarce took any notice, but launched out almost without a breath into Beethoven's great Sonata Appassionata — Op. 57.

The scene changed now, with a vengeance. There came tremendous rushes and bursts, given with a swaying power, a marvellous clearness, a rapid surging and seething and subsiding, which absolutely electrified the crowd of listeners. (Manns glowed over these orchestral effects — as well he might.) The slow movement glided its way like a gentle river, every shade of it rendered with the most loving observance, and the most poetic feeling. Then came the most stormy finale. Towards the close of this, he was simply like some inspired thing, struggling (and visibly, with every muscle of his body) as with a contending demon, till at the close, with a mighty grasp and shove, he bound him down and held him, subservient to his will.

This rather fanciful language does, I assure you, convey quite what it was like to me.

There was a break in the programme here; he rose up to go out. The people fairly shouted at him in a way I have never heard an audience shout in England. Now for the first time he made a low obeisance. They called him on three times; he came lumbering on each time, and bowed again, his tangled mane falling over his

face, and he taking hold of it awkwardly with one hand to put it away.

And now we all breathed for a while.

Next came Schumann's *Kreisleriana* — the whole of them. I heard (you know) her play some of them. She played them best, I think; but he has one advantage over her — a *Cantabile* which surely nobody else ever approached, and which must be heard to be understood, such is its power, its variety, and its perfection.

The same three calls on, after these.

Chopin's Sonata (the one with the Funeral March) came next. We read, in that Leipzig notice, how great his playing of Chopin is. It was the best thing of all. Totally different to everything else. The Funeral March — I have known it (or thought so) from childhood. Well, I tell you, (I won't tell anybody else, except perhaps my wife) I cried at it like a child! There! I felt that tears must come — I tried to keep them back, but back they would not be kept — they rolled down my cheeks. I can't tell you exactly what made them come. He played it with the most utter simplicity — and yet with such a hidden sort of depth. I think it was more the gradual crescendo than anything else which went so to one's heart. It was such utter perfection of gradualness. The thing seemed to come on and on, and grow and swell, in its simple depth of sadness.

And it went away in the same manner. The passage which was *fff* when it first spoke, was, at the end, though still *ff* with reference to the rest, still soft and distant now; the long mournful cortege had, you see, passed on, and was lost in the distance. Nobody could move to applaud it. After the last echoes of it ceased to be distinguishable, he burst into the finale.

Three times called on after this Sonata. Then 4 *Etudes* of Chopin's, one of them the one I called "Woe" to you. He read it on the same principle I do. They were as marvellous as all the rest. The pace at which he took some of them was almost incredible. But as for "missing notes!" . . . Bah!

He finished with several charming things of his own, but I think we were all too used up with emotion to enjoy them as we might had not so much gone before. I doubt not they will come back to us. The last, a *Valse Caprice*, was marvellous. He thundered in it,

and showered the lightest fairy pearls, and sang, and played tricky games — and, called on 3 times as usual, made his lumbering bows, and awkwardly moved back his mane with one of his hands, and disappeared.

His face is the strangest compound of beauty and ugliness, the masculine, and the feminine. In the profile, the beauty predominates — the refinement of the profile is striking. The reverse is the case with the front face. The playing is something the same — marvellous, nay, gigantic; masculine power and energy, and the utmost delicacy of feminine refinement — both in every grade of intensity. Add to this, touches of every description in a degree of perfection which I can't conceive surpassed.

Heigho! I have given you a “notice” with a vengeance. I have to be up at 7 to-morrow to go to town to Prout, and must now see about some sleep. I hope I shall hear from you soon; probably I shall to-morrow.

I am ever most truly yours.

P.S. — I have no doubt we shall find people to say he “thumps” too much and that sort of thing. Some of his gestures occasionally verge on the ludicrous.

(9)

June 1876.

. . . It does strike one with amazement when one sees the enormous masses of people whose lines go not beyond housekeeping and petty scandal. I suppose they are of such a different race to the likes of us, that they find an equal difficulty in comprehending how we can get on without their pursuits.

The Queen has been here to-day, but, not being obliged to appear, I went not near Her Gracious Majesty.

In moments or hours of — well — despondency, which will come upon one now and then (this is a continuation of the previous paragraph) one sometimes thinks what an uphill struggle it is for our race. These other people go calmly sloping along through their narrow restricted orbits; their joys and their sorrows are feeble and dim. This we know, (though they do not) because ours flash and blaze, and then sink down into the very bulb of the thermometer. We

don't know much Rest. Not that we really want to, for Action is the Bliss of the Spirit, but the Body cries out for it at times. I suppose that is, of course, why so many of us die so young.

And are they, who go so soon, to be called happy — glorious beings, for instance, like Mozart, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann — gone away into “*das Stille Land*” as Uhland names it, just, one would think, when this world lay at their feet in all its loveliness? For, to us, with all its drawbacks, it is a lovely world and life. What race finds so much delight in it as ours? The other tribes do not know what it is to us. They rest, and they housekeep, and make money, and have, of course, their lesser griefs and gladnesses, and stare at us, and deem us more or less mad, tho', very often, not a bad sort of folk in our way. Because we treat them much more kindly and considerately than they treat us. They torture and hamper us, and jar our souls, without knowing what they are about; but we spare them, and serve them, and do our best for them, and only wish to be away from them and among ourselves. But I would we knew “*whither we are wending*” (to quote the familiar church song).

That the world into which we are wending is not a “*Stille Land*” I am convinced — but oh, that one knew! If it be not a land of action and of bliss for the Spirit, then, for goodness sake, let us eat, drink and be merry in this, which we know something about. But all those glorious intelligences which we know (in a degree) as we do ourselves, never can merely “*go out*” as Leibgeber calls it.

You think, do you not, that of all the Arts ours is the most like a clear proof of this? The musician's creations live after his death in a peculiar manner which no other artist's do. A picture rots, a statue crumbles to dust. A work of Bach's is just as much alive as a work of Wagner's; and no more, nor less alive now than when he was alive himself. It exists for us on paper, and in performance; two kinds of existence, differing in degree perhaps, but the one quite as real as the other. At all times the essence of it is the Spirit. An orchestra of equal excellence, which should render a symphony of, say, Herz (if there were such a thing) and one of Beethoven — what would be the essence of the difference between the two works? Not the material part.

(Oh dear! what truisms I am putting down.)

Then are the works to possess this spiritual existence, and not the spirit which produced them? . . . They may; one can't tell. But one can't believe it. . . .

(10)

Manchester: April 20, 1877.

I feel disposed to begin with a Jean Paulisches Vorwort³ on the beginnings of letters, in certain cases. I will not call you "My dear Miss Smyth." I have tried it lately, but I shall not to-day. It is too like the lady in Dickens who always said "Doyce & Clennam, I am sure more proper." You and I are, at all events, brother and sister artists. The thing that it is most natural to me to call you is "my child." And as many other people do so I mean to do it too. One thing is, I know you don't mind what I call you, and that after all it makes no earthly difference.

End of the Vorwort or Extra Leaflet. Well then, my dear child, to take the end of your letter first, which is full of the strongest things you could say to me. "Gratitude" is surely a misplaced word. We helped one another in the old times, and laboured side by side. They were happy times. I think no pleasure is so pure and great as working at something one loves with a person who is utterly sympathetic. Well, we had that enjoyment together for a good spell. Your mother did for it, effectually. If I spoke out my mind I should say with St. Paul (so that the most orthodox could find no logical objection) "the Lord reward her according to her work." But yet I shall not copy St. Paul herein, for I suppose she meant well. At all events since I, so to speak, lost you, my music has languished and withered, and at the present hour is dead within me. I find it too great a grind to work at it alone. It won't come. During latter months at Aldershot, all I did, except indeed reading Wagner, was perfunctory, teaching sort of work — in harness to turn mills for other people. Now even that is over.

But while I have been going downhill gradually into these deep places, you have been going along your upward path, making friends with some of the great and noble in the world of Art. You have got Madame Schumann's blessing, and you will prosper and flourish. I have often said I should yet be proud of my first harmony "pupil"

³ Preface.

(though that is an improper term) and so I shall. Well — had I had some 20 years off my back, I might have come along the path after, or with you. But those years will not be shaken off.

I do not yet know Brahms well enough to think so much of him as you do. I do not always get within his meaning. I know both Sestetts. I heard his last quartett — I think in B \flat major. I like it very much, and I liked the (so-called) "Scherzo" best. It is no more a Scherzo than it is an Irish Jig, but it is a superb movement. The critics considered it unintelligible! I heard Madame Schumann & Co. play her husband's pianoforte quartett just as you say they did.

As you say, we shall probably meet some day. "*Les montagnes finissent toujours par se rencontrer,*" as says Cherbulliez. (Do you know him?) I doubt if we shall over the Wagner Concerts. I only can go to one and that the first. I trust you will manage to let me know any great events — such as your going to Dresden (?) and the like. Nobody can be much more interested in what happens to you. Though I am in the lows now, don't suppose I shan't manage to make head against them. I am *dépaysé*, and solitary — always hate new places and new people. Indeed this place and people seem rather repulsive to me at first, but no doubt they will improve. The wrench from Aldershot has been an awful one. . . .

I, too, have a good many friends of sorts, some new and some old. But one thing is certain; there is not one, nor can I suppose there ever will be, who can ever oust you from your place. It would have to be a second you to do so, and a second you does not exist. Now, my dear child, I must bid you good-bye, for the time. *Au revoir* I hope and believe it only is. We won't forget each other, nor all the brave old times when we laboured together. Believe me, then, always to be most truly yours,

ALEXANDER EWING.

(11)

[*On hearing I was really going to Leipzig*]

May 1877.

My dear Child and Friend, — I am so glad! This is really a great blessing — and coming so much sooner, too, than we could have expected. How happy you must be, and how good it was of you to

write off at once and let me know. Because, after all, nobody can rejoice at it more than I do. Ah! were I but coming too! . . . but you will tell me all about it, and I shall always apply to you for the latest information and tips. . . .

. . . Ebben; for the present I can no more — time presses and I want to catch you as early as possible with the heartfelt congratulations which you know will come from me. Between this and your departure we must meet and bid good-bye otherwise than in written words. The address I have given here — (don't lose it now!) is my office and will always find me. Any time, or where, you think we can meet, I will come. Auf Widersehn.

Most truly yours,

A. E.

Part II

GERMANY AND TWO WINTERS IN ITALY



CHAPTER XIV. *Summer* 1877

BEFORE embarking on the story of that happiest epoch of an artist's life, the spell of hard, hope-ridden work which lies between self-dedication and the endeavour to capture the interest of an indifferent world, it should be pointed out that the scene of that golden time was nothing less than a lingering bit of the dear old Germany of Heine and Goethe, doomed presently to vanish under the stress of Imperialism.

In those days there was a feud between Saxony and Prussia; Hanover considered herself an aristocratic breakwater against floods of vulgarity setting in from other states, and Bavaria hated them all impartially. This condition of things preserved exactly what Empire tends to destroy, an individual, dignified, self-sufficing life in each state. As Goethe has said, talent can only thrive in peace and retirement, and in the days when little German courts and middle-sized provincial towns were contentedly working out their own salvation, you got hundreds of quiet, beautiful gardens of art. These Empire sweeps away; competition with other countries ends in the industrialization of everything, including music, and when, more than a quarter of a century later, I revisited Leipzig, I found that was exactly what had happened; there, as elsewhere, a flashy chapter was being enacted that made one think with sadness and longing of past days.

Whether the war, which has brought so many chapters to an abrupt end, will restore dignity to Art remains to be seen, but in

any case the old setting is lost for ever. For this reason and not only because I loved it so dearly, it seems worth while recording my impressions of a by-gone epoch as minutely as I propose to do.

Of the journey I remember little, except that soon after crossing the Dutch frontier the train made straight for a distant range of mountains, and suddenly there was an opening in the chain, through which we passed with the river that had cloven it. This spot, one of the great gates into Germany, which is like the Guildford gap in the Hog's Back on a huge scale, I have often seen again and never without a thrill. And then came a still more poignant moment, the slowing down through hideous suburbs, and the indescribable emotion with which I read the word "Leipzig" on the platform board. We had breakfast at the little old Hôtel de Rom hard by, and sallied forth to find Frau Professor Heimbach's dwelling, the romantic name of which was Place de Repos, Treppe G.

Reposeful it certainly was, being a large block of a building well off the road, jammed in between two other equally hideous blocks; romantic no one could call it, but what of that? Between me and it hung a veil woven of youth and hope — the strongest web of romance; and as we stepped under a dingy archway into a courtyard leading to "Treppe G," I was passing through the Gate named Beautiful into the Chosen City. We clambered up three pairs of rotten wooden stairs, my brother-in-law curiously sniffing the odours that lingered about them — odours which I really believe are the monopoly of the two or three sluggish streams Leipzig is built on, one of which, the Pleisse at its worst, crawled by close to our house. A stout, shy, motherly person, clad in what I afterwards knew was her best gown, greeted us very pleasantly, and informed us (or rather Harry Davidson, for her Leipzig accent utterly defeated the little German I had) that I should not be cut off from England, in that she harboured another lodger — a "*charmanter Junge*," Mr. B., nephew of a well-known potentate connected with *Punch* and a protégé of Frau Schumann's.

We deposited my luggage, inspected my room and the short wooden bedstead with a mountainous feather bed on it, and started off to view the town, which Harry had known in the past.

Even then it was full of charm; the walls and fortifications were

gone, all except the Pleissenburg, which, placed in an angle, pulled the whole inner circle of the old town together, and though really unbeautiful in itself, managed to look imposing, with its squat tower and sturdy bulk. The "ditch," as the Germans call it, had been filled in and planted as a Promenade ages ago, and above it, on our side at least — for we were just without the Altstadt — the tall, narrow, tile-roofed houses of Dürer's pictures towered in a curve above the rise they were built on, and beautifully caught the evening light. Close to us, on the fringe of the old town, was the Thomas Kirche, where Bach played the organ, and the Thomas Schule, of which he was Cantor; this is the only dwelling-place of the Great Dead that ever moved me, hideous though it was. They have pulled down the Pleissenburg and the picturesque old mill beyond it, but I trust the Rathhaus is still standing. Not very superb late Renaissance, it is nevertheless a fascinating building, with its copper-clad pinnacles greened by verdigris, and the warm, sombre colour of the brick. In my time there were periodical agitations to clear it away, as also to widen three or four narrow streets close by, in which were still some fine old houses, but the Philistines were always overborne.

We lunched at the best restaurant in the town, Harry remarking it would reassure my father to hear what we had eaten for about tenpence each, and then walked out into the Rosenthal, a sort of park and wood combined — quite pretty in a stiff style, but reputed to smell of garlic in the spring to a degree that disconcerted even the most ardent lovers. Here I made my first amazed acquaintance with the well-known signboards "*Verboten*" on which the German Empire is run, and which met us at every turn; I had thought grass was meant to walk on, but evidently this was a mistake.

A peculiarity of Leipzig was that the space between the varnished walls and the promenade was carved up into minuscule gardens about the size of a largish chapel in Westminster Abbey, which were let to everyone who chose to apply. We had a rendezvous at four o'clock to drink afternoon coffee with Frau Professor in her garden, the approximate spot being described beforehand, and a promise given that Mr. B., whom we had not yet seen, would be on the look-out for us. A very untidy youth of the artistic type, with a shock of fair hair hanging into his eyes, whose appearance would have disgusted my father, duly met us and conducted us to our garden,

where Frau Professor and her niece Fräulein Friedländer had everything in readiness. In each of the gardens were a tiny summer-house and three or four trees; ours boasted no flowers, but, to our amazement, imbedded crazily in the shingle were five croquet hoops; and here after coffee did we start the most fantastic game of croquet I ever played, Fräulein Friedländer and Harry against B. and me. If you could not get through your hoop because of a tree, you simply shifted the hoop, manipulating the angle a little to your advantage. B. was a player of the violent type whose great object was to cannon off the trees, as if by accident, right into the summer-house where Frau Professor and her cat were ensconced with their knitting. I say their knitting, because we were told if the needles stopped one moment the cat became restless and wandered off into the neighbouring gardens. When the balls began flying about, Frau Professor calmly piled up the crockery for safety behind the summer-house, and resumed her place, well tucking up her feet on the bars of another chair; and I said to myself, an old lady with such sound nerves must surely be easy to live with.

After that there was a gala supper in our flat; I remember we had partridges stuffed with sauerkraut, which were pressed on us as being "*fein und begannt*." This phrase I meditated for a year or so, and eventually found out "*begannt*" was the Saxon for "*pikant*." My brother-in-law, fortunately a smoker, was finally conducted downstairs by B., aided by the light of his own matches, leaving me to my first night under a German roof. Next day I saw him off from the station, and began life in a state of wild enthusiasm that transformed the little round rolls into manna, the thin coffee dear to Leipzigers into nectar, and even invested the sanitary arrangements with a sort of local-colour appropriateness. The only water the Town Council supplied in Place de Repos was a thin trickle from a tap in the kitchen, but as I was equal to cold tubs in those days this was of no consequence.

My diagnosis of my landlady's character proved correct; an easier, more philosophic temperament would be hard to find, and with B. to interpret, the accent difficulty was soon got over. But it was not till later days that one wrong impression was put right. When Fräulein Friedländer had spoken of her aunt, widow of Professor Heimbach, we imagined the title implied high university honours,

as in cases like Darwin and Huxley; face to face with the lady, one could only suppose her eminent husband had risen from the ranks and married in earliest youth. Later I discovered that he was wholly unknown to fame, and indeed I was never able to learn which university had conferred his title on the late Herr Professor Heimbach.

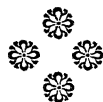
Young B. turned out to be a harum-scarum, harmless sort of youth, whose parents had evidently dispensed with his presence during the summer holidays, for, as I now learned, the Long Vacation was in full swing. In my zeal to leave England I had omitted to make enquiries as to when the Conservatorium term began, and the place would be shut for a month yet; so as Fräulein Friedländer, her mother, and Fräulein Redeker of the *Liebeslieder Walzer* — also a Leipzig young lady — were to spend a fortnight in the Thüringer Forest, it was suggested I should accompany them. Fräulein Redeker, as I said before, was one of my "passions," and when informed that Henschel was to join the party later, I had some notion of the unutterable happiness that was in store for me.

But only a vague notion, for what that first sojourn with real musicians in a little wooden house on the verge of the forest turned out to be, what words can tell? Let it be remembered that never in my life had I met anyone capable of judging whether or not I was the born musician Mr. Ewing proclaimed me, and after all he himself was but a gifted amateur. Here I found my compositions listened to by a man who himself was a composer, who as regards musical equipment was on a level with Brahms or anyone else in the great music world, and on his and other faces I read the desired verdict. But the chief bliss was less personal than that. Henschel is one of the superbly cultivated musical temperaments you find only in Germany and Austria; I have listened to many at work, but have never heard anything to compare with his singing — to his own accompaniment of course — of Brahms, Schubert, Beethoven — in fact any and every composer. He would sit down at the rickety old piano in our lodgings, and all the things in musical literature I had ever wanted to hear, not to speak of others I had never even heard of (including his own "first fine careless rapture," *Trompeter Lieder*), were poured out before me. As some people rejoice in having seen Venice for the first time by moonlight, so I am thankful the *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus* was first made known to me by Henschel, and in

my eyes this dear old friend, whom in after years even my father came to be fond of, was like a god.

We used to take long walks, making for one of the beerhouses dotted about the forest, which superior people laugh at, but which I delight in, on our way singing Volkslieder in parts, the nearest thing to the improvisations of Slav gipsy orchestras I ever took part in. One day we got lost; it was stiflingly hot, the woods smelt like a great bath of pine-extract, and we felt we should die if we did not soon find our beerhouse. Suddenly we came on it round a corner, and to my last hour I shall remember the first glass of beer drunk that day! Henschel had just been somewhere with Brahms; and after telling us the great man's new symphony was to be produced at the Gewandhaus concerts, conducted by the composer, in the coming season, I remember his presently pointing to me and saying laughingly to the others: "Look at that face!" . . . Thrice in my life for a brief space I have been in Heaven, and the first time was in Thuringia.

One souvenir of that radiant fortnight remains with me. I always called Redeker "*die Königin*," because, as I think I mentioned, it was from her lips I first heard *Wie bist du meine Königin*; so I cut out a cardboard crown, of the spiky Neptune kind, and induced her to be photographed sitting on a chair, I myself standing behind it in the act of crowning her. She afterwards married a well-known London physician, and as Lady Semon still possesses this treasure.



CHAPTER XV. *Autumn* 1877

WHILE in Thuringia I had found out, to my horror, from two lodgers of Frau Friedländer's who were of the party, that in that house the piano was going all day, and that composing would have to be done, if at all, at night. I was in despair, but eventually a peaceful reshuffling of *pensionnaire* livestock took place between the

sisters-in-law, and when we returned to Leipzig I settled down with Frau Professor for good and all. Somehow or other the fact that the only other lodger was a young man must have escaped the lynx-eyes at Frimhurst, for I cannot remember any fuss being made about it.

There was yet a week or so of idleness before the beginning of the term. I had been given a letter of introduction to one Leipzig bigwig, head of the great publishing firm Brockhaus, but had no idea of mortgaging my freedom yet awhile, so merely explored the town, enquired into prices, found out what music it was possible to hear in the slack season, and generally looked about me. My first discovery was that the place was full of French names like Place de Repos — relics of the Napoleonic era, which a monarch with more historical sense and less Kultur than his grandson had not thought it necessary to Germanize. If our old block still exists, which is not likely, no doubt it is now called "Ruheplatz." There were many other links with the French past, and I came to know an old lady, last survivor of one of the great burgher families, who stood with me in the window whence she had watched Napoleon ride out of the gates to the battle of Leipzig; she told me he looked "cross and insignificant"!

One day I saw that Hoffmann's Serenade in D, a piece of music I particularly wanted to hear, was to be played next evening at an open-air concert in the Rosenthal Restaurant, and announced that I meant to be present. Frau Professor said this was impossible, that no young girl could go to a place like that by herself and she unfortunately could not take me as next day was "*Grosse Wäsche*." This was the great washing festival held once a month in households such as ours, which, judging by an unsavoury mountain of dirty linen in a certain cupboard, was overdue. The idea of going with B. was ruled out of the question, so I hit upon a plan which this capital old lady somewhat reluctantly fell in with. I hired grey corkscrew curls and a large pair of horn spectacles, borrowed her thickest veil and her gown, which, after I had swathed myself in newspapers tightly tied on with string, and added other contrivances, was a perfect fit. Having finally painted in appropriate wrinkles, I sallied forth to the Rosenthal, sat down with a piece of knitting (for

shown only) at a small table, and asked for beer and a "*Schinken Brödchen*" — that is buttered roll with ham in the middle.

It was a warm September night and the garden was full of burgher families, seated like me at little tables with beer and ham, and listening religiously to the really excellent music — in short it was the Germany of my dreams. The only illumination was Chinese lanterns, but even by daylight I, my stoop, and my hobble would probably have passed muster. I looked about and saw B. sitting with two stout German youths, and presently I went up and asked him some question in a quavering old voice, explaining that I knew no German. The Serenade, a charming piece of music by the by, and everything else I heard that night, enchanted me, and by eleven o'clock I was unlocking our house door and picking my way by the light of the usual match, among horrible islands of assorted "*Wäsche*," to my room. Frau Professor was so well broken to English eccentricity, and so convinced that sons and daughters of our race can look after themselves, that she never even sat up for me — a fact which raised her immensely in my estimation. I had heard from B., whose room was next hers, that she snored more powerfully than ten strong men, owing, he thought, to the shape of her nose, which was snub and flat, like a small funnel driven inwards by a blow from a hammer. As I passed her door I observed that for once he had spoken the truth, being otherwise one of the harmless, improbable liars young men of his type often are.

Next day at lunch I suddenly repeated my question of the night before in the same quavering voice, and for a moment B. looked as if he were going mad, but he promised to keep the secret. When I became a Conservatorist I found I was already famous, this young man, who was always cadging for invitations, having supped out on that story ever since. But it never got to Frimhurst, which was the main point.

A few days before she left for London, Fräulein Friedländer took me to pay an eagerly awaited visit, for this was to be my introduction to the Leipzig music world. Again a climb up three pairs of rotten stairs, in one of the hideous buildings which flanked Place de Repos; and an hour later, sitting at tea — real tea — with my new friends.

Herr Concertmeister Röntgen, leader of the Gewandhaus orchestra, and his family, I had found an answer to the question: "What went ye out for to seek?" In those walls was the concentrated essence of old German musical life, and without a moment's hesitation the whole dear family took me to their bosom.

It all began with a little sonata I had written, a certain B \flat in which proved to be the key to their hearts. He was Dutch by extraction, distant cousin of the X-ray discoverer — as great a gentleman and as true a musician as I have known. She was of the old Leipzig musical stock Klengel, a family that could raise a piano quintet among themselves, and together with their Röntgen cousins a small orchestra. Every violin sonata, every piano trio or quartet printed, would Frau Röntgen or her daughter tackle — the mother's performance unplanned perhaps, but of a fire and musicality that carried all before it. Their one servant was seldom a cooking genius and always needed supervision, and between two movements of a trio Frau Röntgen would cry: "Line, thou canst take the Scherzo," and fly off to the kitchen, Line replacing her on the music stool till eagerly swept off it again. I remember one occasion when dear old Papa Röntgen, as we used privately to call him, who had a delicate digestion, complained of the egg-dish (I do not know how else to translate that basis of German existence "*die Eier-Speise*"), and his wife said with simple contrition: "Yes, I know, it is my fault, I ought to have waited to see her brown it . . . but thou knowest how I love that *Andante!*"

Their son Julius, composer, viola-player, pianist, and all the rest of it, is, I think, still head of a music academy and conductor at Amsterdam, but Line took to marriage and babies and rather dropped her music. To see Julius and his mother playing pianoforte duets was a sight that would nearly overwhelm strangers, the motions of their spirits being reproduced by their bodies in dramatic and absolutely identical gesture. This is what made the spectacle so curious; you could not believe but that some unseen power was manipulating a duplicate set of invisible wires. At the tender parts of the music they would smile the same ecstatic smile to themselves, or in extreme cases at each other; in stately passages their backs would become rigid, their elbows move slightly away from their sides, and their necks stiffen; at passionate moments they would hurl

themselves backwards and forwards on their chairs (never sideways, for they respected each other's field of action) and the fervour or ferocity of their countenances was something I have only once seen equalled — by Sada Yacco's rejected admirer on the Japanese stage. It was all so natural and sincere that though you could not help smiling sometimes, it never interfered with your enjoyment, once you knew them well enough.

If any surviving members of that dear family should ever read these lines, I cannot think, knowing my devotion to their mother and how I revered her, that they will resent my poking a little harmless fun at her and Julius. It was merely an excrescence on the very thing I am extolling — the intimate, you may really say domestic, quality of music-making in those days.

Johanna, the eldest daughter, a particular friend of mine, was a character, and one of the most musical of people, though she played no instrument — already a sign of originality in that family. She was one of the few critics I listened to with respect, and had a phenomenally fine ear. Once I made her sit down sharply on the keyboard and tell me what notes were sounding; she began with the lower and upper ones, a trifle of course to such as her, but with the rest she was equally successful, as far as her bulk would let me check them. She would say, beginning from the bass: “d, d# — *no e* — f, f# — *then nothing till b \flat ,*” and so on, till the echoes died into silence. Let any musician, choosing a slim collaborator if possible, try this and see how difficult it is. Johanna had little or no voice, and what there was of it was poor in quality, but no sheep dog ever kept his flock in better order than she the altos in choral singing.

She was religious and of a Lutheran turn of mind altogether — a slightly different thing to the Nonconformist conscience but of the same family — in spite of which, finding out that she did not know Maupassant, I rashly lent her a carefully selected volume of his stories. But next day she gave it back with a wonderful snort of which she had the secret, conveying remonstrance with me, pride in her own incorruptibility, and confidence in Germany's power to finally crush creatures like Maupassant. In moments of excitement she spoke almost as broad Saxon as Frau Professor herself, and I cannot refrain, for the benefit of those who know the dialect, from giving her immortal words on that occasion: “*Ne, ich danke dir, so*

'nen Dreck les ich nich! da geniegt mer schon mei Shakespere und mei Geedel!" ("No, I thank thee, such filth will I not read. My Shakespere and my Goethe suffice unto me.") Later I was to find out that this is the usual opinion in Germany of modern French literature, though seldom so forcibly expressed.

There was one more belonging to that household, a dear Swedish girl called Amanda Meyer, violinist and composer, who afterwards married Julius; and then for the first time I saw a charming blend of art and courtship very common in those days. Thus it must have been in Bach's time, thus with the old Röntgens, but I don't see how it can come off quite in the same way under modern conditions.

Thinking of differences between then and now, what most strikes me is the fact that very often of an evening these families would combine to make music among themselves. Not only that, but on every other Sunday members of the quartet Papa Röntgen led, the cellist of which was his nephew Julius Klengel, would come to his flat and play all afternoon. Sometimes of course they rehearsed one of their repertory numbers, but these meetings were mainly for the pleasure of making music. Then there was leisure in the world to love and practise art for its own sake, and that, that, is the tender grace of those dead days! . . .

Shortly before the war Kreisler told me a horrible thing; he said: "I have visited every town in the world, almost, of over a hundred thousand inhabitants, and of them all I know only the railway station, the hotel, and the concert hall." I exclaimed it was a hideous, degrading life; why did he go on with it? He spoke of relations to support, financial crises, and so on; and when I uttered the German equivalent of "Bosh!" he replied: "Yes, you are right; one gets into the groove and can't or won't get out of it." . . . This is the sort of madness of which I wish the war would purge the world.

CHAPTER XVI. *Winter* 1877-78

AT the time I signed on as pupil of the Conservatorium, that institution was merely trading on its Mendelssohnian reputation, though of course we in England did not know that. The first person the neophyte would come into contact with was a horrible old door-keeper, Castellan A., relic of the Golden Age, who refused to do even the smallest of his duties, such as deliver a letter, without a tip. Life was then on a scale that made a halfpenny a matter of long disputes between Frau Professor and her tradesmen, hence one penny was considered by our tyrant a satisfactory gratuity, but I never grudged a penny more bitterly. The real fountain of the universal slackness was of course the then Director, an old friend (?) of Mendelssohn's, who had reached the age when, in some natures, thoughts of duty cease from troubling, scruples are at rest, and nothing but emoluments and pleasures — and his were not well spoken of — are taken seriously.

The three masters I had to do with were Reinecke, conductor of the Gewandhaus concerts, for composition; Jadassohn, a well-known writer of canons, for counterpoint and theory generally; and Maas for piano. The lessons with Reinecke were rather a farce; he was one of those composers who turn out music by the yard without effort or inspiration, the only emotion connected with them being the ever-boiling fury of his third wife — a tall, thin woman with a mop of frizzy black hair — at the world's preferring Brahms's music to that of her adored husband. There were always crowds of children prowling about the corridor of his flat, and he was unable to conceal his polite indifference to our masterpieces, taking up his pen to resume his own before we had got to the door. Jadassohn's classes, held in the Conservatorium, were at least amusing, but equally farcical as instruction; their official length was forty minutes, and when he arrived, always a quarter of an hour late, it was to stand with his back to the stove for another ten minutes telling us exceedingly funny stories with the Jewish lisp I came to know so well in Germany. He diligently set us canons and other exercises, but there was seldom time even to look at the work we brought, much less correct our mistakes. Maas was a conscientious but dull teacher, and if Frau

Schumann, when I came to know her later, used to say she didn't mind *hearing*, but couldn't bear to *look* at me playing, owing to the way I managed my hands, it was probably more my fault than his.

At first I was astonished at the lack of musical enthusiasm among my fellow students; gradually I came to realize these girls and boys had come there merely to qualify for teachers' certificates, and certainly whatever flame may have been in their bosoms to start with was bound to burn low in the atmosphere of superficiality and indifference our masters distilled. The glorious part was the rest of the music life, the concerts and the opera. In modern Germany, and everywhere else except Austria, some special conductor, or the performance of some crack orchestra, is what attracts the public; people who will throng to hear Mr. A.'s quartet play anything and everything would not cross the street to hear the same works performed by any other four, all of which is the result of boom of course. But at Leipzig in those days you went simply to hear the music.

The twenty Gewandhaus concerts were conducted one and all by Reinecke, and though in other towns the custom of playing excerpts from Wagner had been started, such a thing was taboo in those sacred walls. Not even the overtures of his operas were tolerated, and I remember an all but successful attempt to bar the *Siegfried Idyll*. This quite orthodox concert-piece was so ill-received, several of the permanent subscribers staying away to mark their indignation, that the experiment was not repeated. You could not call Reinecke an inspiring conductor, but at all events he let the music do its own business; there were no carefully thought-out effects, no rushings and dawdlings, no "Reinecke touches"; in short there was nothing between you and the thing itself, which is just the quality that moves one to the depths, as I said elsewhere, listening to Patti on the gramophone. I suppose jaded palates cannot get on without these artificial stimulants, but it was glorious, when I was in Vienna the winter before the war, to find a public too fresh and keen to need them.

What a curious place that old Gewandhaus was! Built, as its name "Cloth-Hall" indicates, for anything but music, and in defiance of all known laws of acoustics, its sonority was nevertheless perfect.

Acoustics are queer things — so queer that, pondering them, imaginations run riot. An old gentleman from Magdeburg once told us how a door had been opened in the wall of some concert-room, to the complete destruction of its sonority. Horrified, the Town Council blocked up the door again *with the very same bricks* — “*aber es nützte nichts — hin war die Akustik!*” (it was of no use — the sonority was gone). In spite of the delicate touch about the bricks it had walked off in disgust to return no more. . . . The Gewandhaus tickets were almost all subscribed for, and only by intrigue or charity could you get one. But the rehearsals the day before were supposed to be the real thing, especially as they only cost two shillings and to us Conservatorists nothing at all. Old ladies used to bring their knitting to the concerts in those days, an enchanting practice, as stimulating, I am sure, to æsthetic enjoyment as a cigarette; but it was put down as “bourgeois” in the smart new concert hall built three or four years later . . . alas! alas! . . .

The chamber music, in the beautiful “Little Saal” behind the other, was on the same lines, simple, sincere, and run by local men; and as the Director of the Stadt Theater was that go-ahead old genius Angelo Neumann — a man who scented out talent as a pointer marks down game — and the orchestra practically the same as played in the Gewandhaus, the opera was probably at its best then.

One chapter in an old-fashioned tale for children called “The Story without an End” begins: “As for the child he was lost in a dream of delight”; so it was with me during my first season in Leipzig. Great art joys may come to you in later life, but nothing can ever equal a first hearing of Beethoven’s A Major Symphony, or Schubert’s C Major Quintet, in the company of kindred spirits like the Röntgens and others then unknown to me — for my greatest musical friendship was yet to be. When the orchestra was tuning for my first Beethoven symphony, I remember trembling all over like a horse at covert side, and being far too agitated to note the themes.

In October Frau Schumann played at a chamber-music concert, and B. walked Place de Repos with a halo, for his was to be the privilege of turning over for her, she and his father being very old friends. Before a concert, being the most nervous of women, she habitually wept in the artists’ room, declaring to the last moment

she could not possibly go on to the platform; surely then a greater sacrifice to old friendship could not be imagined than associating herself in public with this near-sighted, abnormally clumsy youth. Of course the worst happened; at one moment the music was on Frau Schumann's knees, thence violently shot by her on to the floor, but mercifully there was no break in the performance. A very few months later I got to know her intimately; she was subject to rather lovable attacks of fury, just like a child, and was very funny on the subject of B. I thought of her years afterwards when attending one of Madame Lind-Goldschmidt's singing classes, in the course of which two pupils left the room in tears. The old school had no patience with stupidity.

During the early part of the winter an event happened which even now it almost turns me pale to think of, and oddly enough two scenes in the drama were played on the frozen pond of the Johannisthal. I was working terrifically hard, among other things practising the piano five hours daily, and had made rather friends with a flibberty-gibbet of a Swiss girl, a Miss Heimlicher, whom I persuaded to skate with me at the only hour that did not interfere with my work, before breakfast. There was also a certain young Englishman who paid me much attention, and even went so far, after I had fainted one day on the ice and come to with my head on his knee, as to propose marriage. If I mention the fact it is because it is pertinent to the story — not in a spirit of boasting; for I have always believed the two or three men who have thus honoured me knew perfectly well there was not the slightest danger of their being accepted, so were free to indulge in that priceless luxury of the young, an unrequited attachment.

One day Frau Professor said to me: "It is a pity Fräulein Heimlicher associates so much with that Miss B., for she has a very bad reputation." This was a clincher. I had already caught certain remarks in the Conservatorium, and felt that steps must be taken, so at last I told my friend what I had heard. She was much agitated and asked what she should do. Having, in spite of my folly, some rudiments of common sense, and an English dread of libel laws, I said: "Say nothing, but gradually drop her." My memory is categorical on that point. Miss Heimlicher thanked me profusely, said

I was a true friend, and for a few days I saw nothing of her. . . . The next thing was a lawyer's letter, handed in by an official, commanding my appearance in three weeks' time in court, on a charge of libel brought against me by Miss B.! . . .

Now it must be remembered that one of my father's reasons for refusing his consent to my leaving home was that he fancied I was a spendthrift, and that my mother's diamonds would one day have to be sold to pay my debts; also that my allowance was only just enough to meet my needs. I knew the terrific penalties enforced in English libel cases, and for an hour or two my heart seemed continually on the point of ceasing to beat. I turned over in my mind what was to be done, whose advice could be asked. Either because I did not know her well enough, or from pride, or some other reason, I ruled out Frau Röntgen and eventually, knowing he was a kind, shrewd old fellow, I confided in Jadassohn. "You must have a lawyer," he said. A lawyer! where was the fee to come from? But Jadassohn had a good friend, one Ernst Meyer, a devilish clever fellow; he would give me a line to him saying I was his pupil, and the cost would be nothing to speak of, half a crown perhaps but not more. He looked up the address, off I started, rang a bell, and was ushered into the office of the most odious, inhuman, filthy old scoundrel I ever beheld. Alas! though kindness itself, Jadassohn was more than casual, and there being about twenty Ernst Meyers in the address book, several of whom were in the legal profession, he had picked out the wrong one, as I found out when it was too late! This repellent person read the letter and must certainly have known there was a mistake somewhere, but merely enquired what my business was, informed me I had not a leg to stand on, and would I please hand over ten marks to start with? I had only six with me, gave him five of these on account, and after certain notes were taken, asked anxiously what sort of penalty was to be expected. With an icy-cold indifference, for which I hope he is now burning elsewhere, he replied: "Impossible to say; anything from a hundred to a thousand marks. Good morning."

A hundred to a thousand marks! that is, from five to fifty pounds! I walked out of that office as near despair as I have ever been in my life, and determined to go for advice to our Director. The old monster received me more in sorrow than in anger, said he had

heard of this distressing matter, and that it was a terrible thing to blast the fair fame of one of his children (for thus, so I was told, he looked upon all the three hundred of us). Painful though it might be, he feared I deserved the lesson I was about to receive, and that Justice must run her course; it was not for him to interfere. . . .

What next? . . . I collected my "grandeurs" (a few locketts and an old watch), told the whole story to my admirer, pressed a parcel into his hands, and besought him to sell the contents for me. Next day he produced about three pounds, feared it was very little, but assured me he had done his best. Years afterwards, having acquired knowledge of market values, I came to the conclusion that if he got ten shillings for the lot he did wonders, and that the balance must have come out of his own slender pocket.

My next move was quite fantastic. Among the skaters was a nice-looking man about thirty, who I somehow found out was a lawyer, and actually counsel for the plaintiff! I forthwith introduced myself and, no doubt to his intense astonishment and amusement, begged his advice on my sad case. He was very kind and sympathetic, and finally said: "You must have heard this report from someone else; well, if that person won't come forward you are perfectly entitled to name him or her as your authority, and there's an end of the thing as far as you are concerned." As a matter of fact I *had* just mentioned the subject of responsibility to Frau Professor, but was met with such floods of tears, and such implorings not to take the bread out of the mouth of a widow, that I was remorseful for having spoken. So I thanked the lawyer and said I did not see my way to taking the course he suggested.

My final action, as the dreaded Day of Judgment approached, was probably better inspired than I realized at the time; I wrote, and delivered with my own hand at his door, a letter to the Director, saying I had no money to pay a large fine, should certainly not borrow, but go to prison; all I asked of him was not to let the matter get to the ears of my parents, etc., etc. No doubt the letter was melodramatic and ridiculous, but the old wretch must have felt it was sincere and been rather alarmed at the turn things were taking, for as I afterwards found out, Miss B. was more or less under his protection. Whether he intervened or not I never knew of course,

but when I arrived at the court — not, as I anticipated, a huge place thronged with an expectant public, but merely a dingy room up a back street, in which were neither the plaintiff nor her counsel but just a few stray lawyers — I was told that if I wrote a becoming apology, expressing my belief in the spotless character of the young lady, and paid the costs, all would be forgiven and forgotten. Who shall blame me if under the circumstances, though with inward groanings that cannot be uttered, I put my name to the required lie? In the end the three pounds saw me about half-way through the whole business, but it was quite the worst nightmare of my life. I may add that the friendship with Miss Heimlicher died a natural death, and that soon after, though I think no one knew what had happened, Miss B. disappeared from the scene.

Long afterwards, in fact early in the present century, I learned that my kindly young Englishman had taken Holy Orders — of course! — and eventually become Headmaster of a very flourishing preparatory school. Finding to my surprise that one of my nephews was being educated there, I asked in a fit of sentimental curiosity what kind of person the Head was. "Oh, just the usual sort of beast," replied my nephew, and with mingled feelings of awe and disgust he then learned that the beast might have been his uncle.



CHAPTER XVII. *Winter 1877-78*

By this time I had separated the wheat of instruction from the chaff and evolved a reasonable Plan of Hours. My only friends were still the Röntgens, a state of things that suited me exactly, for I knew well the condition of perfect liberty is being absolutely unknown. Nevertheless one day shortly before Christmas I at last put on a pair of tidy gloves and, getting myself up to look as English and conventional as possible, went to call upon Frau Dr. Brockhaus, the only person I had a letter of introduction to. Doubts had been

cast on the value of this introduction by my parents, inasmuch as it had been given me by Mary Schwabe's mother-in-law, the celebrated philanthropist Madame Schwabe, who held queens and empresses in the hollow of her hand, who swept everyone she met into the whirlpool of her activities, and who had hypnotized me into giving a concert at Camberley, shortly before my departure for Germany, in aid of some institution of hers at Naples. And as I have said the family of Schwabe was not in favour at Frimhurst just then. It turned out, however, that Frau Dr. Brockhaus was one of the great ladies of Leipzig, and I was most cordially welcomed there, this delightful house eventually becoming my home during my first winter abroad. Oddly enough, on the occasion of a second visit I met a Neapolitan scoffer, who declared that the main object of Madame Schwabe's institution at Naples was to persuade the boys who dive for pennies in the Bay of Naples to wear swimming drawers; but this, Frau Doctor explained, was not to be taken seriously.

Herr Dr. Brockhaus, head of the firm, was a melancholy, stiffly Saxon, orthodox personality, whose one adventure must have been the selection of a fiery Hungarian Jewess years younger than himself for his life's partner. Torn between worldly and artistico-intellectual instincts, Frau Doctor had, I think, never quite decided what her true bent was, but at that time, two of her sons being of marriageable age, the line was Society mitigated with a sprinkling of the Serious. Her first kind action as far as I was concerned was inviting me to assist at a German Christmas under her roof. I confess that to this day I have not made up my mind as to the merits of that great institution. People began to look pale and careworn about it early in December, and spent half January recovering from exhaustion. Where there are crowds of very young children it may be worth all this fuss, but on the whole I prefer other manifestations of German thoroughness.

Immediately after the festival, Frau Doctor went off to their country place near Dresden — ostensibly on business but probably to recoup — and declared it was her intention to institute herself my mentor on her return, and introduce me into the World. The next great festival, seeing the Old Year out, was celebrated by me at the Röntgens'. We had a grand feast, with sweet champagne in

very long, narrow glasses that held nothing, *pâté de foie gras*, and hot punch — a red essence of some unknown alcoholic derivation, mixed to one's taste with boiling water. I noticed as on many subsequent occasions that Frau Röntgen, whose digestion was magnificent, picked all the truffles out of her helping of *foie gras* and put them on her husband's plate — a proceeding that dear man took quite as a matter of course. After supper we all sang part-songs in which I was tenor, when not bass, and it was remarked by Papa Röntgen that the more punch was drunk the more I pushed up the pitch — an interesting effect of alcohol which makes one think that to hand it round before certain *a cappella* pieces at concerts would be a good plan. On that day Julius and Amanda became officially engaged, and I had my first wondering view of untrammelled German demonstrativeness.

During these months, as most of my associates knew not one word of English, I had been making good progress with German. I have always found that understanding a foreign language as spoken is far more difficult than learning to speak it myself — a common experience, I daresay, of talkative and forthcoming people; and by way of practice, as well as from love of the theatre, had at once started a custom of going continually to the play, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, when there were performances in the Old Theatre, at reduced prices, of the classics, and also of certain well-known box-office trumps, such as *La Dame aux camélias*, and *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. I used to buy the text in a twopenny edition, get it up thoroughly beforehand, and install myself in the first row of stalls, where I drank in every word. Shakespere was always in the repertory, including plays seldom performed, such as *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, etc.; and once I saw the three parts of *Henry VI* squeezed into two, and *Richard III* played on successive nights. Gradually I came to know all the possible and some of the impossible plays of Goethe, Lessing, Schiller, Racine, and even one or two of Calderón, and these Sunday performances were always crammed.

I must have been very innocent, or perhaps only very stupid, at that period, for I wondered what on earth the heavy father in *La Dame aux camélias* meant when he said his son's liaison with Marguerite could not possibly result in the "founding of a family," or

words to that effect. Having only a vague idea of what exactly the relation was, I puzzled my head over that conundrum for two or three years at least — what the French call looking for midday at fourteen o'clock. . . . On the whole I fear it was a case of stupidity rather than innocence, for the great question of sex was a constant preoccupation. But I would rather have died than discuss it with any living soul.

There are one or two incidents in one's past to think of which fills one with self-loathing. In another place I spoke of such an incident connected with a governess's false chignon; but then I was a child of ten and had been deceived, whereas when the story I am about to relate happened, I was a grown-up maiden whom no one had deceived; it was merely that ignorance had led me where ignorance does lead the young. When the small crash came, the proper course would have been the one I recommended to Miss Heimlicher in the libel business — to do nothing and just let the matter drop; but this policy comes hard to some people at all ages, and though in the Protestant upbringing of youth truthfulness is so strongly inculcated, we are never taught that "*toute vérité n'est pas bonne à dire*!" This is the only excuse I can offer for this regrettable occurrence, which is as follows.

In all these plays the actress who took the tragic sympathetic parts was one Marie Geistering, whose career appealed to me to start with. She had been a very celebrated operette singer, and if not actual creator of the rôle, was a specially brilliant "*Belle Hélène*"; also, though of course I did not know this, her success in a sister career had been phenomenal, archdukes, grand dukes, and great nobles of all nationalities competing for her favours. She must have been a plucky and energetic woman, for when her voice began to go, and with it her celebrated slimness, she vanished for two or three years, to reappear on the stage as tragic actress. She was at that time over fifty, had a very fine stage presence, and was a tremendous favourite with the public. I have no idea how the really knowledgeable classed her, but to me, young, inexperienced, and stage-struck, she was the ideal embodiment of all the heroines I loved and pitied, who were more real to me than most living people, such as Maria Stuart, Adrienne, Phèdre, Hermione (in

Winter's Tale), and others. In short I was quite mad about the Geister, and after the performances used to stand for long half-hours in snow or slush to see her muffled form shoot out of the stage door into her fly. At last I took to buying little bunches of violets or roses and bribing the stage-doorkeeper to put them in her dressing-room, with my name and a few words of impassioned admiration on a card.

This went on for quite a long time, and at last one happy day I was given a note from "the gracious lady" saying she was much touched by my attentions, and would like to thank me in person, naming a day and hour at which I should find her at such and such an address. The last was an unnecessary detail, for countless times, with skates in my hand — she lived on the way to the Johannisthal — had I walked up her stairs and past her door to leave fictitious notes on imaginary persons on the floor above, but alas! without ever having had the luck to meet her. When the great day came, as I rang her bell it seemed my trembling knees must surely betray my agitation to the servant.

I don't think I have said that except in the very smartest set, the family always occupied a room called "the living-room" in contradistinction to the real drawing-room, kept for grand occasions and familiarly known as *die gute Stube* (the good room). This was always a cold and forbidding apartment, the stove being seldom lit, with highly polished floor and chairs arranged geometrically round the walls. Opposite the door, on a smart bit of carpet, would be a table with plush cover, a square of crochet work and a flower-pot in the centre, behind which, jammed up against the wall, was the state sofa; and the hostess's first words invariably were: "*Bitte setzen Sie sich auf's Sofa!*" ("Please to seat yourself upon the sofa"). I was ushered into the *gute Stube*, and without any delay the object of my adoration appeared, followed by a shy young man whom she introduced as her husband; and down we two women sat on the sofa.

Then began the most banal of all banal conversations I have ever taken part in. The Geister had needlework of some kind — a paralysing fact to start with — and no doubt was at her wits' end, poor thing, what to say to this adoring English girl, whose German at that time was far from fluent. As for me, the shock of

seeing Maria Stuart at close quarters, in a tight-fitting dark blue satin bodice covered with spangles, rouged up to the eyes, and wearing a fluffy light wig, produced a commotion in my breast as when the tide turns against a strong wind. The husband hovered uneasily in the background, till told somewhat sharply to sit down, which he did, still very far off; but through it all I clung to the memory of the passionate emotions of the theatre, and when asked to admire a little white dog of some odious, fluffy, yapping breed, it was painful to have to say I only liked big dogs.

This however was a blessing in disguise, for a quite animated discussion about the disadvantages of big dogs in towns ensued, whereas up to that moment we really and truly had talked about the weather like embarrassed people in books. When it was time to go I was graciously invited to come again, and any slight feeling of disappointment was put down to knowing that in my overpowering shyness I had cut rather a poor figure. True, on reflection, this greatest of great ladies on the stage seemed, in real life, strangely unlike any lady I had ever met, but to dwell on this thought was distasteful; indeed the great difficulty to people of a certain temperament is to admit the evidence of their senses, once the imagination has been thoroughly stirred. One won't see, won't hear, won't believe. . . .

After a decent interval I went to see her again, and yet again. As I now perceive, she belonged to the large class of actresses who literally have not an idea in their heads beyond the theatre, and oh! how distinctly I remember noticing, in spite of my infatuation, that even in the plays she took part in, nothing interested her except her own rôle — a trait common to most *prime donne* I was to meet with later on. But I got over this somehow, and though a determination to believe in her hair and complexion had to be abandoned, I got over that too, and our friendship, begun in the autumn, went on well into the New Year, though rather haltingly. Strange to say, Frau Doctor, who in some ways was very innocent, and whose conventionality was pleasantly inconsistent, did not remonstrate. But remonstrance was to come!

Among the grandees she introduced me to after Christmas were the Tauchnitz family, inventors of the Tauchnitz Edition, he — a German of course — being English Consul. Here also I was more

than kindly received, and when it turned out that his friend Lor-r-rd Napier of Magdala was a connection and beloved old friend of my parents there was great enthusiasm, and Frau Doctor must have sighed a sigh of relief. I at once succumbed to the charms of his very pretty and intensely kind daughter-in-law, who like all Tauchnitzes had a fair knowledge of English manners and customs. She had heard, and been greatly amused about, my passion for the Geister, but was wholly unprepared for the news that we were on visiting terms. I remember her horrified face as she said: "*Aber Kind, ganz gewiss würde so eine Freundschaft Ihrer lieben Frau Mama sehr unlieb sein!*" ("But, child, I am sure your dear Frau Mama would greatly disapprove of such a friendship.") And then, with infinite discretion, she proceeded to lift the veil, grand dukes and all. It appeared that the young man really was a husband of sorts, only in that world you married, divorced, and married again as often as you pleased. In this particular case two or three husbands had been tried and found wanting, the poor lady's instinct being evidently to settle down, but not, not with an elderly admirer. In the end I quite allowed the acquaintance must be dropped, but unfortunately the only course which commended itself to me was to write and say so; which I did, adding that *if she reflected on her past life she would understand why!* I am thankful to say I got no reply to this odious letter; indeed, I had begged there might be none — a cowardly touch added to the rest.

It is to be feared that in those days I admitted no line of conduct, no principles, except those in which I had been brought up, and unrepentant sinners filled me with pharisaical indignation. Thinking over this incident I have often wished one could be certain the Geister felt not the slightest pang about it, only amusement. It is more than likely . . . but I regret that letter even more than the chignon business.

CHAPTER XVIII. *Early in 1878*

EARLY in January came the event to which, ever since its advance announcement by Henschel in Friedrichsroda, everything else had seemed but a prelude, the arrival of Brahms in Leipzig to conduct his new Symphony in D Major. Henschel turned up from Berlin at the same time, and from him I gathered that at the extra rehearsal, to which we outsiders were not admitted, there had been a good deal of friction. Brahms, as I found out later, for Henschel would have been far too loyal to admit it, not only was an indifferent conductor, but had the knack of rubbing orchestras up the wrong way. Moreover with one or two exceptions — notably Röntgen, once an opponent but now an enthusiastic admirer — the Gewandhaus musicians were inclined to be antagonistic to his music, and indeed considered the performance of any new work whatsoever an act of condescension. As for Brahms, accustomed to the brilliant quality of Viennese orchestras, which was to entrance me equally when I came to know them, he found his own race, the North Germans, cold and sticky, and let them feel it.

Henschel also informed me the great man was staying, as usual, with Heinrich von Herzogenberg, Director of the Bach Verein, whose beautiful wife, about whom the Röntgens were for ever raving, was said to be the most gifted musician and fascinating being ever met or heard of; Brahms had more than once remarked that, but for her, he would never set foot in Leipzig at all. To my mingled delight and horror I learned, too, that Henschel had actually spoken to him about my work, telling him I had never studied, that he really ought to look at it and so on; and after the general rehearsal this good friend clutched and presented me all unawares. At that time Brahms was clean-shaven, and in the whirl of emotion I only remember a strong alarming face, very penetrating bright blue eyes, and my own desire to sink through the floor when he said, as I then thought by way of a compliment, but as I now know in a spirit of scathing irony: "So this is the young lady who writes sonatas and doesn't know counterpoint!" I afterwards learned that Henschel had left a MS. of mine (two songs) with him, that he

subsequently looked at them, and remarked to Frau Röntgen that evidently Henschel had written them himself!

I saw him again during that week, but as all my reliable impressions of him belong to a later period, when I came to know him well, it is safer to speak here of the symphony, which, though it deeply impressed me, left me a little bewildered. I had yet to learn that only a conductor of genius — for preference not the composer, except in very rare cases — can produce a new orchestral work intelligibly; at that time too the idiom of Brahms was unfamiliar, and doubtless the rendering lacked conviction. One thing I well remember, that on this occasion I first realized exactly how much critics grasp of a new work not yet available in print. The great Leipzig Extinguisher, after making the usual complaints as to lack of melody, excess of learning, and general unsatisfactoriness, remarked: "About half-way through the very tedious first movement there is one transient gleam of light, a fairly tuneful passage for horns." He had not noticed this was the recurring first theme, which had already appeared for those selfsame horns in the second bar! . . .

The Röntgens, Klengels, etc., who were full of enthusiasm for the symphony, had been asked to meet Brahms at the Herzogenbergs', and I heard more and more about the wonderful "Frau Lisl," whom I wondered if I should ever meet, for they said she detested society and saw no one but a handful of intimates.

Meanwhile I had discovered that living *en pension* was unnecessary extravagance, and determined to go into rooms — a plan Frau Professor took in excellent part. This time luck was emphatically on my side. Next door to Frau Doctor Brockhaus, who lived in the Salomonstrasse — one of the new residential streets on the other side of the town, all big houses with wooded gardens — I had often noticed a picturesque, French-looking old house, two-storied, with tiled roof and dormer windows, standing well back in its ramshackle grounds. One day, lo and behold! I saw hanging on the paling a little board with the device "*möblirte Zimmer*" (furnished rooms), and the end of it was that I took up my abode there on February 1, 1878.

My new landlady, Frau Brandt, was a nice but very untidy woman with a howling mob of children. There was only one room at my disposal, and that with the wrong aspect too — a point I had learned to take interest in; but as I had fallen head over heels in love with the house and knew it was to pass into other hands in the summer, I decided to put up with everything, provided satisfactory arrangements could be made for the future.

I don't think I have yet said, what perhaps goes without saying, that it was always understood that I should pass the long vacation — in other words the summer — at home; also that Papa and certain relations had been confident that the desire to live abroad, being merely a whim, would not survive my first winter. By this time, however, they were disillusioned on that point and not surprised to hear I was deep in domiciliary plans for the autumn. The incoming people were interviewed, and finding we suited each other perfectly, I secured the promise of two rooms I had set my heart on and settled down contentedly for the time being in Pandemonium.

As I only spent two months in the single room with the wrong aspect, I will describe my lodgings and my manner of life generally as they were in the following autumn, and during the rest of the time I lived in that fascinating eighteenth-century house.

An ingenious system was arranged between my landlady and myself, under which I ate my midday meal either with the family or at a restaurant, according to the way my day was planned; but I invariably had supper in my own room. I would buy a quarter of a pound of cold ham and some butter (a store of beer was always in the corner of my sitting-room), and there, when I came home after a concert or the theatre, I found the table ready laid with a hunk of black bread on it. The outside wall sloped about half-way up, and my larder was a new birdcage, resting, among wild vine leaves, on the rain-gutter below the dormer windows, and leaning crazily against the roof. There were adventures with cats, but the birdcage defeated them. On the other side of the house, separating the front garden from the road, was a seven-foot wooden paling, made of up-rights and cross bars, the gate in which was locked by law at eleven p.m., but it was of the sort an agile person who had forgotten the huge rusty latchkey could climb, in spite of the spikes. Sometimes

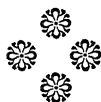
there would be belated passers-by or a policeman; if so, one walked on up a side street and returned when the coast was clear. When I came to know the smart people, nothing astonished them more than that this feat was performed on an average two or three times a month.

It was of course quite unusual for girls of my class either to go to restaurants or to walk about the streets alone at night, and at first friends used to implore me to let a servant see me home; but neither that nor any other curtailment of my liberty would I permit. Only once was I spoken to by a strange man in Germany, and remember insisting on the fact to Charlie Hunter, who remarked that was surely nothing to boast about.

Reflecting on it all, I am astonished to think how calmly, on the whole, my Mentor, now my neighbour, took my proceedings. In the depths of her southern soul was a secret strain of Bohemianism which the rigours of bourgeois life in a particularly conventional North German town had not wholly eradicated; probably she felt, too, that though I really did my best to please her on side issues, there was nothing to be done with the ground plan. I know that often when I asked her advice she would say in a tragicomic voice: "*Was nützt's dass ich dir einen Rath gebe? folgen wirst du doch dich!*" ("What's the use of giving you advice? I know you won't follow it!") Moreover she was clever enough to see that though the "nice people," by way of explaining their indulgence to her protégée, were for ever reminding each other feverishly that I was English (a card I played, alas, poor England! for all it was worth), as a matter of fact I met with more than tolerance, and but for the circumstance that nothing really counted for me but my work, should have been in a fair way to become terribly spoiled. My little song *Rothraut*, sung with a strong English accent, had a great success everywhere, and the Brockhaus boys presented me with a black velvet student's cap lined with red silk, round which was embroidered in gold and scarlet the music and words of the first line. I still have this treasure, which moths have respected, and of course adored the music-ridden German nation more than ever.

Invitations to balls — a great temptation — poured in, and as I had left all my finery in England there were anxious confabulations with Frau Doctor (who wished me to do her credit), followed by endless letters to Mother, full of ingenious and economical sugges-

tions on the toilette question. The worst of all this gaiety was that the candle was now being burned at both ends, but kind Frau Doctor was, I fancy, too interested in my social career to grasp that fact; anyhow I cannot recall her advising me to put the brake on.



CHAPTER XIX. *Early in 1878*

By this time I was beginning to get some idea of social conditions in Leipzig and noticed there was a fairly sharp division between three main classes — the burgher aristocracy (or worldly), the professorial set, and the artists.

To begin with the first; its kernel was the "*Gewandhaus Gesellschaft*," a group of about forty leading families, not necessarily wealthy, who had intermarried for generations and owned most of the woodland villages round Leipzig. It was governed by intricate laws like the ancient guilds, and nobles were excluded from membership. Among these burgher patricians patriarchal customs prevailed; in the town married sons and their families generally occupied upper floors of the paternal dwelling, which as often as not was in the same building as their business. In the summer the whole party migrated to the country house (always within easy reach of the town), and while *der Bappa* and *die Mamma* inhabited the "*Schloss*" — generally a pleasant, homely erection no more like a castle than is many a French "*chateau*" — the young people were dotted about the grounds in not very tasteful villas. This world had the defects and virtues of all provincial society, and although, as I have indicated, they made kindly allowances for strangers, among themselves their manners were stiff and their ideas rather narrow, always excepting a certain leading family I shall introduce by and by.

The rural aristocracy (*Land Adel*) played no great part in Leipzig society, but later on I saw some of them in their own preserves and found them more like ourselves than the burgher patricians. In fact

one realized, as that fierce rule of the Gewandhaus Gesellschaft I quoted indicates, that the two classes had kept strictly aloof till quite recent times, with no such medium as our English gentry — blessed result of the open-aristocracy system — to bridge the gulf. The Gewandhaus set was frequented by the military — Generals of 1870, for instance, in slightly patronizing mood and smothered with orders, whose wives gave themselves amazing airs; also by stray members of the *Land Adel* dotted about the country round Leipzig, who occasionally deigned to mix with the rich bourgeois and drink their champagne. You even met sprigs of Royalty in course of being laboriously coached for their degrees by obsequious professors . . . between whiles seeing life under the guidance of our young swells. Despite the pride of class that I so much admired in the old Leipzig families, much fuss was made over these visitors from a higher sphere.

As for the professors and their belongings — a group stiff with intellectual pretension, whose exaggerated display of mutual respect masked mutual hatred and jealousy I have never seen equalled — these I detested at first sight and after one or two essays kept out of their way for ever more. My initiation into this world — a *Professoren-Ball* to which Frau Doctor got me an invitation — is one of the fantastic experiences of my life. Imagine the guests of a Lambeth Palace garden party of thirty years ago suddenly ordered at a moment's notice to appear for the first time in their lives in a ballroom. . . . There were stuff gowns turned in at the neck in a V with a bit of lace sewn in; there were black trousers worn beneath gray waistcoats; there were gaudy students' jackets besmeared with stains from the restaurant; and, worst of all, tubs were evidently unknown in the intellectual world. Maidens writhed with archness and never ceased giggling, young men bowed, scraped, and declaimed, flourishing their arms about, and at one moment I found myself dancing the lancers opposite a youth whose hair was half-way down his back, who wore someone else's swallow-tailed coat, and who was cutting elaborate capers such as a gorgeous Highlander might have envied, in a pair of double-soled boots covered with mud! . . . The elegance of the really great world is incontestable everywhere; once, when I had a fugitive glimpse of a peasants' ball in the Bavarian Highlands, with its beautiful national costumes, long pipes, and unaffected jollity, I asked myself, as I do now, why,

between Paul Veronese and Jan Steen, must there be this vast tract of senseless, hybrid commonness? . . .

And yet the professor tribe frisking in ballrooms is more sympathetic than pontificating at dinner tables and in drawing-rooms. Needless to say there were remarkable men among them, people of European reputation whom it was interesting to watch, but not one single remarkable woman. There is a phrase for ever on German female lips that used to irritate me: "*Mein Mann sagt . . .*" ("My husband says . . ."), but as uttered by the ignorant, arrogant wives of these infallible ones it is the least attractive side of German life in a nutshell. In fact the general atmosphere of the *Professoren-Kreise*¹ (I am speaking figuratively — not alluding to their ballrooms) was unbreathable.

The artists who, as goes without saying, were my chief associates, were sometimes to be found wandering about forlorn in the circles of Professordom, but they professed and sincerely felt unmitigated contempt for the worldlings, and were seldom if ever met in their haunts. As stranger and *Engländerinn* — and in those days Germans had a sneaking respect for English freedom of spirit, and above all for English table-manners — I was admitted to all these various groups, and confess it was delightful to meet again among the rich burghers certain habits of life one was accustomed to, but might vainly hope to find elsewhere in Leipzig — things like tubs, horses, and tennis, for instance. Even to have the door opened by a smart footman was not without its appeal; and when some of my artist friends wondered how anyone could care to frequent such frivolous society I would stolidly reply: "In my father's house are many mansions" — a phrase which, in the German equivalent, "*in meines Vater's Haus sind viele Wohnungen*," lends itself with very comic effect to a strong English accent and for that reason had a great success. It is almost impossible for a young artist to avoid being narrowed in matters artistic by his own set, but socially I have always held firmly to a profound, hereditary conviction that it takes all sorts to make a world.

Later on I found that the snobbism of rank and wealth is of course the same in Dresden and Berlin as in London or other capitals, but the one type you never met at Leipzig was the International Smart.

¹ Professorial Circles; thus they describe themselves.

I could name twenty such, labelled English, French, German, or Italian, as the case may be, who wear the same clothes, think the same thoughts, and are practically identical; such of course never dreamed of coming to Leipzig, hence you could there study German burgher life in a state of comparative purity.

In all the different groups mentioned the particularist feeling was sure to crop up sooner or later. Stray Prussians were perpetually having digs at the Saxons, whom they considered servile, false, and rather stupid. The Saxons, for their part, cordially hated the Prussians, but also feared them; for which reason, being a race not distinguished for moral courage, their sentiments were only revealed in an outburst or in confidence. Some of the Saxon turns of speech certainly tend to give their own case away; for instance an adjective I have never heard elsewhere is *hinterrücksch*, used to qualify people who take malevolent action behind your back; and a real good old Leipzig joke is to say, if someone disappears without apparent reason from the circle: "He must have taken offence at something!" But their most characteristic phrase is one that prefaces any remark whatsoever which, if repeated, might have unpleasant consequences: "*ich will nichts gesagt haben!*" — whereby you are warned that if necessary the remark will be disavowed. Farther than this caution cannot go! Still, as soon as I became capable of distinguishing, I infinitely preferred the kindly, humane, homely Saxons to the overbearing Prussians, particularly after a winter spent in Berlin.

From the very first dialect interested me — a matter which can be only studied to a very limited extent among the educated in our islands; thus I soon mastered the varieties and found out what a soul-revealing medium it is. To speak of only a few blatant instances, the Prussian dialect is harsh, clean-cut, and uncompromising; the Bavarian, though easy-going and good-natured on the surface, suggests fathomless depths of brutality below; whereas through the Austrian turn of speech — careless, fascinating, and slightly nasal — there gleams at its worst a cold, smiling, rather Oriental cruelty as unlike brutality as the East is unlike the West. But in the peculiar language spoken in Leipzig, including diction, intonation, and every imaginable harmonic, there is a deliberate wallowing in the inæsthetic, a cult of the ungraceful, of which Leipzigers themselves are quite conscious though few emancipate themselves wholly from its

thralldom. And no one reviles the Saxon dialect more mercilessly than travelled Saxons.

Meanwhile, in whatever set I might happen to find myself, three names were constantly on all lips, uttered with respect, admiration, or devotion, as the case might be. Hitherto for various reasons I had met none of these evidently remarkable personalities; then suddenly Fate made good, and in the course of a single week Livia Frege, Lili Wach, and Elisabeth von Herzogenberg swam into my orbit.

When you whisper certain names to yourself a cathedral lights up in the dark recesses of memory, and all who knew her would agree that the name Livia Frege is one of these. In her youth she had been a very celebrated concert singer, and some of Mendelssohn's and Schumann's finest songs are dedicated to "Livia Gerhardt"; now, on the threshold of old age, she was a great lady, but also the simplest-hearted, warmest friend of every true artist in the place. One of those women born to the purple, with the prestige of a glorious artistic past thrown in, there was a sheer loveliness about her that I partly ascribe to the bluest, most eternally youthful eyes ever seen. She had married when very young a Leipzig banker and left the concert-room for ever; some say nothing short of this renunciation would satisfy the burgher-patrician parents-in-law, but to separate Livia Frege from music was beyond anyone's power.

I first met her in the sort of state box over the orchestra in the old Gewandhaus, which, though other mortals in part owned it, was always called the "Frege Loge." She had heard of me from the Röntgens, and when someone told this queen that in the little basket I hung on a peg in that sacred box was a parcel of cold ham, she replied according to legend: "And pray why not?" in a manner that rolled the would-be mischief-maker out flat. Livia had once been a very poor young artist herself, but perhaps her interlocutor had forgotten the fact. Though stately to a degree, and prejudiced in an old-fashioned pleasant way, she took me at once into her good graces, told me to call her "*Du*" and "Frau Livia," and I am certain had pleasure in the adoration it was impossible even for the old and cold, let alone the young and hot, to help lavishing on her.

She was very religious, not in the alternately blatant and gushing



Lili Wach (née Mendelssohn-Bartholdy), 1877

style affected by many pious Germans and hall-marked by the Hohenzollerns, but with absolute simplicity. On the subject of evil communications corrupting good manners she was particularly strong, and once told me she had never listened to a Wagner opera because she wished to keep herself "musically pure." Said as she said it, and given her past, this was not in the least unsympathetic; it fitted in somehow with her gentle, serious idealism, which again was saved from sentimentality by a gift of pealing laughter that made heavy-minded admirers stare. So beautiful, so dignified, almost an old woman, and yet able to nearly die of laughing like the very young! I used to note the beauty in her face and voice when she spoke of Mendelssohn, who, with his wife, had been of her most intimate friends. A world that since then had begotten Brahms, not to speak of Wagner, was growing contemptuous of its former idol, and she was aware of the fact, but did not consider it necessary even to discuss the matter. No insistence on his merit, no apology — just the old love and faith. I thought this attitude wonderful, but to carry it through you had to be Livia of the light-holding sapphire eyes.

Years after her death H. B. once said casually: "Ah yes — Frau Frege — she was Mendelssohn's mistress, wasn't she?" Recovered from the shock of realizing that even in a world as mad as ours such a legend could have a second's life, we began inventing analogous questions, such as "Didn't St. Theresa elope with Ignatius Loyola?" or "Wasn't George Sand Musset's grandmother?" etc., etc., but to those who knew my old Leipzig friend nothing as fantastic as the original proposition can be coined.

Frau Livia had a weakness for princes, which fact was commented on sarcastically by some of the worldlings and may have secretly troubled simple-minded humbler friends. But as these never found themselves neglected because of the Royalties, where was the harm? To the market of life this highly inbred race brings a quite special contribution, to take no interest in which is surely not a sign of superiority? Indeed, one can say of Royalty what has been said of God, that if it did not exist it would have to be invented. The proof is that again and again it has been swept away . . . to be reinstated by succeeding generations; and so I hope and believe it will be to the end of time.

Many a young musician used to be given a preliminary canter at Frau Livia's house before a select audience, and it was on the first of these occasions attended by me that I met the two other bright jewels in Leipzig's crown.

Lili Wach was the only absolutely normal and satisfactory specimen I have ever met of a much-to-be-pitied genus, the children of celebrated personalities; she was Mendelssohn's youngest daughter, and judging by their portraits must have been more like her Christian mother than her Jewish father. Yet both the delicately cut profile and soul to match had a touch of Israel at its best, and she used to say: "Make allowance for Jewish caution!" when a certain shrinking from positive statements held back the emphatic "Yes" or "No" demanded. She was very musical, but being her father's daughter and extremely reserved by nature she kept the fact so dark that few people knew it.

Her husband, a distinguished Prussian lawyer, was notoriously musical. One of the most interesting men I have ever met, he was also, as I realized later, a typical modern German in many respects. Yet not in all, for though Professor of Jurisprudence at the Leipzig University and terrifically learned, there was not the faintest touch of pedantry about him — a fact which privately scandalized some of his Saxon colleagues. Man of action and politician, he was suspected of aiming at high honours in the Prussian bureaucracy, and it was the fashion to question the sincerity of his religious convictions, which were of the Hohenzollern brand; but being fond of him, I put this down to jealousy. One day, however, at a funeral from a friend's house, where the usual speechifying round the coffin was led by the pastor in the orthodox inflated style — a style even cultivated people accept as the proper thing — what was my astonishment at hearing Wach hold forth in exactly the same key! . . . Wach, of all critics of other men's oratory the most pitiless! Since then, having re-read the Book of Joshua, and grasped that the rôle of God in the Prussian world-scheme is identical with that of Jehovah in the Wars of Israel, it seems likely that Wach, an ambitious man, deliberately poured sincere convictions into this particular mould. That is why he was a typical figure. Otherwise the most spontaneous of beings, warm-hearted, tempestuous, and brimming with sense of humour, his wife would plead with gentle irony that

there was enough violence, vitality, and definite assertion in the house without her emerging from her shell.

My friendship with Lili Wach was destined to become only second to the still closer relation I am about to speak of. As for Wach, who had a great reputation as mountaineer, his wife always maintained it was natural that we should have taken to each other at first sight, being chips of the same block. His theories on large families, which I have confessed to sharing, were ultimately her death, she being far too frail for child-bearing on the scale he insisted on. But I loved these too numerous children, in whose eyes, because of clambering over the paling (and later on because of a big dog of mine), I became a sort of legendary figure, and with whom I kept up a warm friendship that only the war interrupted.



CHAPTER XX. *Early in 1878*

AND now, if these memoirs were a masque, I should bid the musicians and electricians conspire with me to usher on becomingly the last and best beloved of my trio of L's — Lisl, otherwise Elisabeth von Herzogenberg.

The published correspondence between her and Brahms has given the world some idea of the personality of this remarkable woman, in whose house I became what he always called me, "the child," till Fate violently and irrevocably parted us. At the time I first met her she was twenty-nine, not really beautiful but better than beautiful, at once dazzling and bewitching; the fairest of skins, fine-spun, wavy golden hair, curious arresting greenish-brown eyes, and a very noble rather low forehead, behind which you knew there must be an exceptional brain. I never saw a more beautiful neck and shoulders; so marvellously white were they that on the very rare occasions on which the world had a chance of viewing them it was apt to stare — thereby greatly disconcerting their owner, whose modesty was of the type that used to be called maid-

enly. In fact the great problem was to prevent her swathing them in *chiffon*.

About middle height, the figure was not good; she stooped slightly, yet the effect was graceful and ingratiating, rather as though she were bending forward to look at you through the haze of her own golden atmosphere. In spite of this ethereal quality there was a touch of homeliness about her — to use the word in its best sense — a combination I have never met with in anyone else. Of great natural capacity rather than well informed, a brilliant, most original talker, very amusing, and an inimitable mimic, she managed in spite of all her gifts to retain the childlike spirit which is one of the sympathetic traits in the German character — and what is more, to blend it with the strong-pinioned fascination of one who could but know, like Phyllis in the song, that she never failed to please. And this is surely a remarkable achievement! It really was true that with her sunshine came in at the door, and both sexes succumbed equally to her charm. As her marriage was notoriously happy, possibly too because her brilliant talents inspired a certain awe, men did not dare make love to her, not at least the sort of men she met at Leipzig. But I fancy that in other circumstances a small flirtation would not have been disdained; I used to tell her that when talking to men she became a different woman — a difference which though slight was perceptible — but this mild accusation didn't fit in with her scheme of things and was eagerly repudiated.

In a burgher world it certainly went for something that this siren was an aristocrat. Sincerely as everyone in the artist set despised worldliness, I think her exploits in the kitchen (for among other things she was a Heaven-inspired cook) gained in picturesqueness when you reflected that had the Court of Hanover not come crumbling about their ears in early youth, she and her sister Julia Brewster would have been Maids of Honour. Logic has made great strides in Germany, but at that time there were still a few illogical people about.

The essential point was of course her musical genius. Almost by instinct she read and played from score as do few routined conductors, and in judgment, critical faculty, and all-round knowledge was the perfect musician. And yet, though if ever I worshipped a

being on earth it was Lisl, her singing and playing left me cold. This critical attitude on the part of a novice might well have vexed one accustomed to unqualified admiration on all sides, from Brahms downwards; but being quite unspoiled, she was only puzzled, and used sometimes to ask: "How comes it that thou alone dost not love my music-making?" to which I would reply, as I believed, that thinking too much about voice-production and fingering interfered with her spontaneity, never guessing that what was lacking was the one thing needful, passion. At the bottom of all that tender warmth and enthusiasm — *Gemüth* as the Germans call it — was a curious hardness of which in all the years of our friendship I saw but one passing sign, and which perhaps nothing short of one of those catastrophes that shake human nature to its foundations would have laid bare. Her music betrayed it, but here again she was so richly equipped, and the spell her musicality cast was so potent, that, as far as I know, others were not conscious of fundamental coldness. Years afterwards her brother-in-law H. B. told me that he had guessed it, and once in the early days of our acquaintanceship in Florence (1883) I remember his saying that to drive a spear too deeply into that soil might be to break its point. But as I was the only outsider on spear-driving terms of intimacy with her, no one had put it to the proof, and at the time that remark was made it was indignantly brushed aside by me.

I noticed early in the day, however, in connection with a third person, that she had not much psychological instinct, not in deep places at least. Complex natures baffled her, and I would sometimes charge her with lacking the sort of poetic imagination that saves you from cracking your brain over odd twists and turns of character. "Surely if you do this or that, *it is natural* that the other person should react thus and thus?" she would say in cases where it was obvious that the person would react in quite another manner; and once she astonished me by writing: "To understand a person's action means, surely, that you yourself would act thus in their place?"¹ which I thought a fantastic interpretation of understanding.

Again I had always assumed that harmony was the crown, the final polish, the ultimate subjection of possibly dissonant elements,

¹ Appendix, p. 275, No. 9.

not the avoiding of dissonance for the sake of consonance. "Take all that comes along, all at least that matters, and work it into your scheme somehow" — such was my unformulated creed . . . but it was not Lisl's. In the light of what happened afterwards — the eternal small crises all down the years as well as the final breach — I not only see in her a temperamental worship of harmony at any cost, but recognize how almost unconsciously, and with infinite skill, she avoided conflicts; also that those who associated with her, from her husband downwards, took care that no tempest should ruffle her sunny serenity. This dislike of stress and storm was never connected in my mind, nor I think in the minds of those who conformed to it, with the valvular heart disease which was a perpetual source of secret terror and distress to me, and of which she was to die when relatively a young woman. But nowadays, having noticed how an obscure instinct of self-preservation determines the course of persons thus afflicted, I think her malady was probably as great a factor in our story as any other.

This by the way. Meanwhile in that spring of 1878, making straight for the sheltered waters on which, like an enchanted boat, her soul was floating, there appeared on the horizon — a Stormy Petrel!

Herzogenberg, or, to give him his full title, Heinrich Freiherr von Herzogenberg, was a few years older than his wife, and had been brought up by the Jesuits for the priesthood, as are many younger sons of noble Austrian families; but on reaching adolescence he rebelled in order to devote himself to music — as unheard-of a thing in his walk of life as in mine. The family was originally French, his grandfather, Vicomte Picot de Peccaduc, having emigrated to Bohemia at the time of the French Revolution and taken the name and title of Freiherr von Herzogenberg — a correct but inadequate rendering of his own fine patronymic. A slight Jesuitical strain in the grandson, which he was quite aware of but which never affected him in the larger issues of life, worked in delightfully with his humanness, culture, and abounding sense of humour. Though without her glamour — and who would wish to find two such shining ones under the same roof? — he was quite as much beloved by those who knew them well as his wife. Of

course he adored her, and in one of her early letters she, the least vain of women, told me how delighted she had been when, finding himself near her at some smart party (and of an evening she was positively dazzling), he remarked in the dry, comic way his friends knew so well: "*Abgesehen von aller Verwandschaft muss ich gestehen dass du hübsch bist*" ("Apart from relationship I must confess that thou art pretty").

A more learned musician can never have existed; without trouble he turned out fugues, canons, etc., etc., that could be read backwards, upside down, or in a looking-glass — a gift that has as little to do with music, perhaps, as tying yourself into knots or playing twelve games of chess at once, but which is certainly rare and remarkable. He used to compose for a given number of hours daily, and as may be guessed the result was often dry. I know not with what ambition he started his career, but remember his once remarking rather touchingly that he made no claim to having anything new to say — merely hoped to hand on the good tradition. As was inevitable with such a wife, he arranged all his works for piano duet, which was one of the very few trials connected with this ideal couple, for he had a touch like a paving stone. She was as devoted to him as he to her, and in sympathetic company a very discreet little mutual demonstration would sometimes take place. This their adoring world found delightful, and eventually I learned to accept it as part of the German civilization.

The Wachs and Herzogenbergs, who at once became the kernel of my Leipzig existence, associated but superficially and in a slight spirit of superiority with various other friends of mine to whom I was deeply attached — worldlings in whose company, as hinted above, certain aspects of home life were found again. Chief among these was a family whose name heads the list when I am meditating unpayable debts for kindnesses received. The master of the house, Consul Limburger, was a wealthy wool merchant and the only real man of the world in Leipzig, gay, handsome, well turned out, and without a touch of German heaviness. Serious persons considered him frivolous but were none the less obliged to follow his lead, for he was the moving spirit of the whole place. As president of the Gewandhaus Concert Committee he fought hard against the in-

tense conservatism of that body and it was mainly his work that the *Siegfried Idyll* was forced on to the programme — a crime to forgive him which took all Frau Livia's Christian charity, and needless to say she was among the absentees at that concert. He further managed the Gewandhaus balls, the big suppers given to passing celebrities; and started various innovations in sport, such as paper-chases on horseback and I think polo. Finally he had the best cook in Leipzig, and once told me his luxury was to expect whatever wine he ordered to appear on his table and . . . never to check his cellar-book. The same system of not enquiring into things too closely was observed as regards his sons, and I fear laid up trouble for him in later life.

His wife had, in certain subtle ways, more affinity with the people one knew at home than anyone else in the town. I cannot quite sum it up by saying she was a gentlewoman — there were other Leipzig ladies who could claim to be that of course — but these had a touch of provincialism, whereas behind her quality was a larger civilization, something which I really believe none of her intimates noticed except myself. She was of an old patrician Frankfurt family and her conversation was interlarded with French phrases like the letters of Goethe's mother, another Frankfurt woman. Now here is a curious fact. I had no enthusiastic soul-to-soul alliance with her as with Frau Livia and others — it was just the friendly relation between a woman of the world and a girl she is kind to; and yet, at the most difficult moment of my life, merely by taking it for granted that certain people don't do certain things, however strongly circumstances seem to point that way, she in great measure saved the situation for me — as will be told when the time comes. Expressed gratitude, expressed anything, would have embarrassed her beyond words but . . . she knew that I knew; and afterwards, when terrible sorrow came to her, I think it was some comfort to talk to me by the hour, that silent bond being between us.

In my experience with her I first learned, what subsequent knowledge of life has confirmed, that when you are in a tight place worldlings are often better Christians than the elect. And another thing; this old friend had peculiarities that most people found rather ridiculous and beyond which they never got. But such eccentricities often argue an absence of all preoccupation with self, a

purity of spirit that seems to me beyond all else rare and lovable — and this was her case.

The Limburgers were typically German in that, with the exception of the mother and the one daughter, every member of the family was as much at home in music as ducks in water. They danced, shot, rode, skated, besides being assiduous young men of business, but all played the piano or some other instrument, and a new work performed at the Gewandhaus was as much an event for them as for the Herzogenbergs. Their criticisms may have been less technical but I discussed music as gladly with them as with many an expert; and this is the supreme charm of a musical civilization — that amateurs are in it and of it as well as professionals. What a bore it would be if you could only talk books in literary circles, and what a comfort that reading can never become a fashionable fad, to which, alas! in unmusical countries music so fatally lends itself; thus does the smart world go to concerts in Paris, and in London to the opera.

Before leaving the subject of Leipzig personalities I must mention two sisters who were an integral part of the scene. One, Frau von B., was the widow of the only aristocrat except Herzogenberg who had ever been a composer of merit. This wise and wealthy man, in order to satisfy the baulked maternal instincts of his childless wife, had left a small fortune for the founding of a home for seven poor musical students, to be built in his big garden and run by his widow. On the subject of her guardianship of these ever-recurring batches of youths, popularly known after the well-known folk tale as "the Seven Ravens," volumes might be written; how they were either talented but too rascally to keep, or talentless but too charming to turn out. The true stories of their escapades, together with the versions they themselves related to their guardian, used to go the round of the town; I think she suspected the truth more than was generally supposed, but like many people found it convenient to feign ignorance.

If this kindest, most generous and lovable of old ladies was a little on the grotesque side, her sister, Frau Dr. E., was surely the most fantastic figure ever accepted and assimilated by civilized society. I have described the astonishing Leipzig dialect, but as spoken by

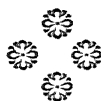
Frau Dr. E., who, from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, showed what Nature in ungracious mood can achieve when she gives her mind to it, it killed all conversation around her (just as the celebrated garlic of the Rosenthal overpowered the scent of other flowery growths); further, it was her habit to say out loud things which as a rule only escape one in unguarded moments.

The advantage of a self-contained provincial society is that originals are permitted to luxuriate in peace; thus amazing types of monk are seen prowling about in Italy such as are only produced within monastery walls. And when I think sadly of dead and gone romantic Germany, it is an additional pang to reflect that with dwarfs, gnomes, and witches on broomsticks, figures such as Frau Dr. E. have disappeared for ever.

The first time I saw her was at a musical gathering at her sister's; I noticed a massive old woman yawning as if her jaw would drop off who presently said to Frau Röntgen: "Do not think, best Frau Concertmeister, it is because I am bored, but whenever your dear husband plays the fiddle it sets me yawning." I duly called on her later, as politeness demanded, and when I expressed regret at not finding her in, she remarked: "Well, I cannot say I regret it for to tell the truth you are to me from my heart unsympathetic — *but I believe the kernel is good.*" She was a widow without family, rich and incredibly stingy, and being devoid of false shame, many of the E. anecdotes for ever flying about were on that theme. At a supper she gave to the Seven Ravens I heard her say loudly when a grand ice-cream appeared: "This is only to be handed round *once*"; another time, while slowly turning the pages of a subscription list, she observed to the collector without a smile: "Let me see what is the smallest sum one can give." Again, cabs in those days cost five groschen for one person, and six groschen for two. A piteously poor friend of hers was once driven by her to a concert, and, knowing her patroness's peculiarities, duly handed over three groschen; and the incoming stream of concert-goers heard Frau Dr. E. say, in her slow, final way: "No, thou needst not pay half, but thy groschen thou canst well pay," whereupon she selected and pocketed two halfpennies.

There is in many circles of society an individual corresponding to the court fool, an *enfant terrible* who performs, like Tragedy in

the Aristotelian sense, a universal purgative rite, delivering other bosoms of perilous stuff. Such a benefactress was Frau Dr. E., than whom the world can better spare many a more decorative figure.



CHAPTER XXI. *Spring* 1878

AND now, having given some idea of the people who made up my new world, I will go back to the moment when I first met the Herzogenbergs — that is, the end of February 1878. I knew at once for certain that we belonged in the same group, as the ensuing years were to prove, and though aware of her notorious aversion to new relations trusted to music to build a bridge between us, which it did. Both of them told me they had heard great reports of my musicality and I was at once asked to show off. I well remember that Herzogenberg was far more forthcoming than his wife; and though she upbraided me in a friendly, semi-jocular manner for not having joined the Bach Verein and urged me to do so without delay, it was he who, after cross-questioning me about my studies, suggested I should bring him my exercise books to look at.

Of course I turned up with them next day, and was overwhelmed by his raillery of Conservatorium teaching, as he pointed out one gross uncorrected error after another. Both were genuinely interested by my compositions, but again I noticed she was the more reserved of the two, and understood this reserve had nothing to do with the music. Finally Herzogenberg proposed undertaking my tuition himself. "It will be great fun," he said, "for I have never given a lesson in my life; and what is more," he added, turning to his wife, "thou, who hast so often bewailed thy contrapuntal ignorance, shalt also be my pupil . . . and I shall meanwhile learn how to teach."

Needless to say I fell in rapturously with this proposal, insisted on his accepting some nominal fee, for honour's sake, ceased attending my Conservatorium classes (ostensibly on the score of health),

and it was understood that before leaving for the summer holidays I was to give formal notice. I at once joined the Bach Verein and began, with my lessons, an initiation into Bach. Strange to say he did not reveal himself to me at once, not even in the *Passion according to St. Matthew*, which I heard on the ensuing Good Friday for the first time. Yet is it so strange after all? Between Bach and Beethoven there is at least as wide a gulf as between Giotto and Giorgione, and at that time my musical intelligence was only cultivated in patches. Before six months had elapsed Bach occupied the place he has ever since held in my heart as the beginning and end of all music; meanwhile the Herzogenbergs were doing their best to speed up matters.

Shortly after I joined the Bach Verein an incident occurred which opened my eyes to the fact that Germans harboured feelings about the English of which we had no suspicion and which certainly were not reciprocated. My enlightener, a stately black-bearded man with extra-polite Leipzig manners and rather a friend of mine I had imagined, was a certain Herr Flinsch — Treasurer of the Bach Verein, one of our leading basses, and also, although I did not know it, a wholesale stationer. One day I went into a smart-looking shop and asked for some English writing-paper. An article was produced which did not meet my wishes, and I began describing exactly what was wanted, repeatedly saying: "It must be *English* paper." Suddenly from a back room in the shop my black-bearded friend darted out in a violent passion, and without one word of greeting launched into a diatribe about the paper trade — informing me that as a matter of fact all the best so-called English paper was made in Germany, and merely sent to England and stamped "English" to satisfy (alas!) the snobbishness of his own countrymen, who still believed in the supremacy of English wares. A day was at hand however when German industry would no longer suffer these humiliations — when all the world would know where the best of everything comes from, namely Germany. After which outburst the speaker bounced back into his den, again omitting any sort of greeting, and banged the door. When next we met at rehearsal, and ever after, our relations were distant and dignified.

During the few weeks of opportunity that remained to me for

the time being, I applied myself busily to two tasks: the first orders of counterpoint, and the stealthy undermining of my fellow pupil's delicate but unmistakable aloofness. Meanwhile, it might be asked, what did Frau Dr. Brockhaus, hitherto my great friend and confidante, say to these new developments? It had been arranged ages ago, long before the dawning of Lisl, that I was to go to the Berg, their country place near Dresden, for a few days after Easter; and though the idea of leaving Leipzig was now intolerable, especially since the Herzogenbergs were departing in the second half of April, I shrank from hurting Frau Doctor's feelings by breaking my engagement. But I was not a good hand at keeping things to myself and she soon found out she had a rival. Yet such was Lisl's reputation for charm, genius, and so forth, that my older friend no more blamed me than Calypso and Circe would have blamed Ulysses for falling in love with Minerva, had the goddess seen fit to give that complexion to their alliance. I duly went to the Berg, but despite warm feelings of gratitude and affection towards my hostess, blessed the grand final Bach Verein concert that brought me back to Leipzig on duty after four days' absence.

Then suddenly Fate did me a good turn. Immoderate work, combined with too much excitement generally, was telling on me. I had among other things become subject to violent fits of palpitation, and there were yet more drastic warnings, such as the romantic fainting on the ice, that health was giving way under the strain. At last one day, at a birthday party at the Klengels', I collapsed altogether. Lisl, who was present, and who, though I was unaware of the fact, had gradually become attached to me in spite of herself, insisted on taking me straight back to my attic, and during the rather severe illness that followed, really a nervous breakdown, nursed me as I had never been nursed before, putting off her departure from Leipzig a fortnight in order to see me through the worst.

And there, amid the homely surroundings of sloping roof and ramshackle furniture, began the tenderest, surely the very tenderest relation that can ever have sprung up between a woman and one who, in spite of her years, was little better than a child. I had heard, but almost forgotten, that the one sorrow of her strangely happy life was that she was childless; now I came to know that this

grief, though seldom alluded to, was abiding and passionate (as a matter of fact this was the only spot of passion in her). Shortly before I met her, hope had finally been abandoned, and though one or two attempts to coax unwilling nature were made later on, it was without much hope as far as she was concerned. Thus I became heir to a fund of pent-up maternal love.

Every day during that happy fortnight as the clock struck eight I heard her slowly climbing the stairs, pausing for breath methodically at every fourth step; then the door curtain was pushed aside and the dear face, framed in a haze of golden hair, peeped in cautiously lest I should still be asleep. Asleep! — when I knew Lisl was coming! Except for two hours at midday, when her maid was sent to mount guard, she stayed with me the whole livelong day, washing me herself, performing all the sick-room offices for me, cooking on her own little cooker the most tempting dishes her culinary genius could devise, reading to me, alternately petting and keeping me in order. And as I got better she used to play Bach and Brahms, including her own wonderful arrangement of the new symphony, knocked together in a few hours from the full score lent her by him before she had ever heard a note of it — the sort of thing she did with no trouble, and made as light of as she did of her heart complaint. It was settled that though my mother must never hear of it I was really her child, that, as she put it, she must have “had” me without knowing it when she was eleven; all this with a characteristic blend of fun and tenderness that saved it from anything approaching morbidity, of which she had the greatest horror. At that time our conversation was carried on in both languages, later always in German. She was one of the very few foreigners I have met to talk English with whom was not distressing; her accent was admirable, not indiscreetly so as is sometimes the case, but, like her vocabulary and handling of the language, easy, original, funny, and somehow or other just right — as indeed was everything about her.

At the beginning of my illness the doctor had feared permanent heart damage; not till this danger was finally ruled out and my convalescence in full swing did she consent to leave me and depart for Austria with her husband, appointing Johanna Röntgen *chargée d'affaires*. At every stage of the journey postcards were sent, and during the two weeks that elapsed before I was fit to start for Eng-

land, the daily letter was the only event that counted, though mysterious boxes of chocolates, flowers, and books were continually being left at my door "by command of the gracious lady von Herzogenberg."

I missed her so dreadfully that most nights my pillow was wet with tears—a babyish weakness which, when she heard of it, touched but still more distressed her. Never was anyone more enamoured of gaiety and serenity than she. After her departure I was allowed to see a few friends, and learned that in the early stages of my illness Anna, the servant, had remarked to one very stiff Leipzig grandee who had asked what was wrong: "*Vielleicht ist das Fräulein zu lustig gewesen*" (Perhaps the Fräulein has been too gay)—the sort of thing you would say of a student recovering after an orgy. Meanwhile a coterie of birds had settled in a tree near my window, and one of them, which at first I thought was a bullfinch, but it was not, used daily to waken me with this little theme (on which I afterwards worked many contrapuntal exercises in England):



I have said we were to be violently separated by Fate; when that separation became final I put away all the letters from her I possessed and never thought my eyes would rest on them again. In 1892, a few months after her sudden death, a parcel arrived through a mutual friend, inscribed on the inner covering in her husband's well-known hand: "Ethel's letters to Lisl." This parcel I never even opened, but laid it, as in a vault, beside the other in an old tin despatch-box of my father's, on which are painted his styles and titles as lieutenant in the East India Company's service — a box ninety years old!

When, a few weeks ago, it occurred to me by way of a pastime to write these memoirs, I meant to stop at the moment of my flight to Germany — chiefly because I shrank from opening that vault. The resolution taken, for many days I was in a dream, staring at the tragedy with the dazed, uncomprehending eyes of thirty-three years ago, astounded at the richness and beauty of that long tender friendship — wondering, with the old, dull bewilderment, how such things can come to an end. Only by degrees did it seem possible to fix my eyes on the happiest years of my early life and let them tell their story as they were lived — without a thought of what was to follow.



*Elisabeth von Herzogenberg ("Lisl")
in fancy dress, 1877*

APPENDIX II

[A]

*From Myself to My Mother and Other Members of the
Family, 1877-78*

[NOTE. — I found the following letters among my mother's papers, and such is the enthusiasm they radiate that I hope I may be pardoned for printing them with all their youthful redundancies on their head (a temptation to tone down the slanginess of the style having been resisted with some difficulty). It must be remembered that those at home were waiting to hear whether my claim to having a vocation was illusory or not, so no wonder I nearly went off my head with joy at the encouragement I met with, and eagerly reported it.

I lit on these letters some time after the corresponding part of the main text had been written, consequently a few incidents are described twice over — the only time this will happen in these pages. But I think it may amuse other memoir-writers besides myself to compare the two versions — separated by an interval of forty years!]

(1)

Rotterdam: July 27, 1877.

My own darling Mother, — Here we are, safe and sound, after a most successful journey, with all our luggage so far intact and our persons washed and in order. . . . Well, once at Harwich we were the first people out of the train and the first on board the steamer, thus getting the pick of the berths. We sat up on deck until one o'clock and anything more beautiful than the night you cannot imagine, a very calm sea and brilliant moonlight. As we left the break-water behind we passed close to a bell buoy which tolled in the most eerie and dismal manner imaginable. I slept like a top till the stewardess called me just as we were entering the river. We were on it about an hour and a half, passing through quite the ugliest country I ever set eyes on, as flat as a board and nothing but bulrushes and poplar avenues leading apparently nowhere and planted apparently apropos of nothing in particular. The little villages are like toy villages and look as if painted afresh every morning, and the windmills are absolutely bewildering and all the colours of the rainbow.

Impressions that Remained

My billy-cock seemed to create great excitement and interest among the Dutch sailors, as indeed among some dirty boys in St. James's Park, one of whom informed me that I had got his father's hat on. At present I am writing in the coffee-room, and the dialect sounds like German baby-language. There are plenty of asphalt patches about the town, and Harry and I are thinking of extemporising a net with a table cloth, marking out a court, and commencing a game of lawn-tennis. . . . We go on straight to-night, stopping nowhere, and arriving at Leipzig about eight to-morrow morning. We then repair to a hotel, wash, dress, etc., and go on to the Friedländers. I shall in all probability write from there again to-morrow. I cannot realise that I am off one bit, and I did not dare talk about it yesterday for fear of realising it too much.

Good-bye, my darling Mother. My dear love to all, and I do hope Nina and Violet are playing lawn-tennis a good deal . . . and *sitting up!*

Your most loving child.

(2)

Leipzig!! July 28, 1877.

Something Hotel (Didn't catch the name).

. . . All ideas are flown and I am mentally wallowing in one thought and one only, i.e., here I am, and I have only just begun to realise that fact. You know we came straight through, and both slept like tops. The carriage was too full to admit of lying down, and yet I did not even feel stiff, nor I believe does Harry, who will probably speak for himself ere I close this. . . . Harry and I on our arrival made elaborate toilettes and sat down with zest to Kaffee and Broedchen, though we had gone through the same performance at half-past five this morning at Magdeburg, and I have just come in from a prowl about town. Of course I at once repaired to the Conservatorium and gazed at that most gloomy edifice with feelings easier to imagine than to describe, though somewhat modified by the fact that we were not quite sure which of seven or eight gloomy edifices in the block was actually the Conservatorium, as the latter adjoins the University and is much the same style of building. There were a good many students strolling about, with very festive caps and less festive, not to say stodgy, casts of counte-

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nance. Most of them wear spectacles, *all* wear trousers that bag at the knee, and not a few are decorated with intersecting cuts on their faces — these latter swagger a good deal. We then repaired to the public gardens where I saw what my eyes had often pictured — the masses of chairs, and in the midst the raised orchestra with desks all round. I see “Egmont” is to be played to-night at the theatre; I wonder if we shall go. Harry thinks it is time to go to Place de Repos, so I close this for the present. . . .

(3)

To Alice Davidson

Place de Repos, Treppe G., Leipzig: July 30, 1877.
. . . The sort of life I at present lead is this: I get called at half-past six or seven, get up leisurely and ask for my breakfast, which goes by the name of “Kaffee.” Each person has their own little tray, coffee-pot, plate of rolls, pat of butter, etc. You can have an egg if you like, but I don’t. You have this meal in your own room, or else in the sitting-room quite promiscuously and independent of anyone else. There are beautiful public baths close by, and after your coffee you repair to the baths. I mean to learn to swim by-and-bye. I then write and read and practise; dinner is at one, and consists of hot meat, always plainly and well cooked, generally meat cutlets or slices off the joint. Seldom the joint. Or else you have little wee chickens cut up into four bits and roasted in dripping (not gravy). The salads are truly wonderful, all sorts of vegetables cooked up cold in grease and vinegar, with little dabs of forced meat and bread dumplings scattered about it. Then one has cucumber, and yellow beans as hard as nails and very sour. Then comes the inevitable “Mehlspeise,” a sort of sodden but well-mixed pie-crust stuffed with some plums or sweet cherries in between — the sort of thing Papa would like the children and himself to live on. Then rolls (my pet “Franzbrödchen” and others) and butter appear, and sometimes fresh fruit. After dinner the Frau Professor goes to sleep, I fancy, and about 3.30 or 4 we go into the garden and drink milk fresh from the cow and coffee and rolls, playing cards or reading. Whist is a favourite game, and Frau Professor, Thekla,¹

¹ Fräulein Friedländer.

Impressions that Remained

Mr. B., and I are to play in an hour or so. There is a forest about five minutes from here which is ten miles through, and therein is a little "Restoration," as they call them, where a glorious orchestra plays Mondays and Fridays.

You would be astonished at the cheapness of everything here. Theatre tickets are 1s. 6d., and this morning I bought all that the soul of woman can desire in the shape of writing-paper, envelopes, steel pens, black and white cottons, ink, boot-laces, etc., for about 1s. 3½d. Little things are less than one-third of the English prices and of course one is able to go continually to the Opera; yesterday we went to hear "Lohengrin" and this evening are going to hear "Aida"! Harry comes back to-morrow and leaves for Scotland on Thursday I think; as you know he's in Dresden at present . . . he was so dear travelling. . . .

Perhaps Mother would like to see this letter so do send it to Frimhurst and write soon, darling. On second thoughts send it first to dear old Mary to whom I shan't write till I have something to tell. . . .

(4)

Friedrichsroda, Thüringen: August 5.

My darling Mother, — As I mean Sunday to be my day for writing home, I herewith inaugurate that festival, sitting at 9 o'clock in a little arbour in a little garden in a little town in a little mountainous province called Thüringen. We came here yesterday quite *en masse*, Frau Friedländer, Thekla, Marie, and the two Scotch girls who live with the Friedländers, called Binning. Gustchen (Fräulein Redeker) comes on Wednesday. We were met at the station by the great baritone of whom you have heard me speak, and of whom Jenny Lind says he is the finest artist she has ever heard since Stockhausen — Herr Henschel. As he always sang in London with my two, they are all great friends, and we shall simply have the loveliest music to be had anywhere all the two or three weeks we are here, for Herr Henschel was brought up to be a pianist and plays splendidly. He is a regular genius, and his compositions are lovely. I hear he draws most beautifully, but shall soon see for myself, as at 10 o'clock we are going up there (he is staying with a Herr von Milde half-way up the mountains) to do music. It is too delicious!

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The manners and customs are too funny. We live in a little villa, the whole of which would go into the hall at home, and in the cellar live four cows. On Sundays they are let out into the fields. You hear ever so far off a horn, very fairly played, and presently a man appears, playing it all about the town, at which signal all the cows tramp forth with a most bewildered air and are driven away.

German beds, till you get accustomed to them, are not very comfortable. To begin with, they are of wood and about the size of an ordinary crib. The mattress is fixed in, and over that a sheet, exactly the breadth of the bed and a little longer, is laid; on the top of you is a sort of pancake consisting of two sheets sewn together with bits of flannel between, the same size as the under-sheet, so that even were the mattress not glued to the bed, tucking up is an impossibility. If you are not a quiet sleeper, which I now am, all the things are naturally kicked on to the floor in no time. In the winter you have a feather-bed on top of you, which you wrap round you *à la* martial cloak. And, oh, the butter and cream and Franzbrödchen and fruit and pure cold air! I shall have to wear a jersey here, so cold is it, and my appetite is perfectly alarming. We went on Thursday last to Halle where Thekla and Gustchen had to sing in one of the many Church concerts given here. I did not care about the two first things much, Mendelssohn's "Lauda Sion" and a Cantata of Bach's. But the last thing, Mendelssohn's "Forty-second Psalm," in which the two had a long duet, was quite lovely.

That reminds me not to forget to tell you that before we left Leipzig I went to hear Verdi's new Opera "Aida" (in which Patti plays in London). You know the scene is laid in Egypt, and one of the kings comes in with his victorious army, carrying trophies, i.e. dogs, cats, storks, frogs, and heaven knows what else, on the ends of long sticks. On anything being said of which the army approves, all the sticks are waved frantically in the air and the beasts get mixed up. How I laughed! Why will they be so realistic?

Yesterday we stopped at Weimar and went to see Schiller's and Goethe's houses, and then their coffins. It was awfully interesting. Everyone is so fond of "Rothraut." I am going to print it and the five others, and sell them if I can. . . .

Thank you, my darling mother, over and over again for your dear,

Impressions that Remained

newsy letter. I am more than happy. Harry will have told you how completely and utterly at home I am here, and I think we are all really fond of each other. The German life suits me so wonderfully, *everything*, eating, drinking, manners, etc. Frau Professor says I am as if I had been here six months at least, and I feel as if I had been here for years. In this musical country, strange to say, my music goes farther than in unmusical England, and my accompanying and singing at sight are made much use of. Darling mother, indeed I will tell you *everything*, whether I am ill or well, happy, or, what is impossible, unhappy. I can't help feeling glad to think I am missed. . . .

B. is really a nice boy. You can't think how good-natured he is to me, and if I allowed it would give me the very coat off his back. Old Frau F. I like the least of the party; she strikes me as an awful old humbug, always "Mein liebstes theuerstes Fraeulein" and such grimaces and posing. I don't think the Binnings love her. They say she is very kind and so on, but very slithery. To old Frau Professor I am quite devoted, such a plain-sailing, simple, straightforward old thing.

. . . These German pens drive me wild. Could you in your next letter send me a couple of "J" pens, and in the next two more, and so on, as I can get no decent nibs in Germany. Dearest love to the children and best thanks for their dear letters. I am so glad Miss Periwig makes them sit up, and hope their lawn-tennis will prosper when the heat is less intense. . . .

(5)

Friedrichsroda: August 12, 1877.
. . . Henschel is only 27, but he is gradually making a name for himself, and musicians take on an average 40 years to do this. One day when I was out of the room Thekla told him I composed, and on my return he asked me (as he afterwards confessed as a matter of politeness and with no expectations) to see something I had done. I produced a song — we have no piano, but of course he reads it through like a book. Mother! he said such things of my talent! Things I never even dreamed of. He said it was simply wonderful, and could not believe I had had no tuition. Of course he found faults, and afterwards told a friend of his whom I know that they

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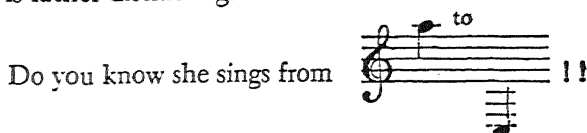
were faults arising from talent. In the afternoon we went to the von Milde. He is the first man in the Berlin Opera, old now, but a great musician with a voice like a god, and his wife is also very musical. Of course Henschel was there and several other musicians, and I was asked to sing some things of mine. Mother! I wish you had been there. They were astonished, they all came round and said it was "merkwuerdig. wundervoll," and all the afternoon, when Henschel was strumming, as *he* only can strum, between the songs, he kept on coming back to the modulation at "Schweig' still, mein Herz" in "Rothraut" which pleased him hugely. Afterwards, when we were all supping, our host proposed the health of the artists and coupled with it the name of "one who has but lately come among us and whom we hope to keep," and once again I was fêted, and oh I wish you had been there! The bliss of knowing that when I went on so about cultivating my talent I was not wrong! For though I felt it myself, I sometimes doubted whether it was only for a woman, and an Englishwoman living in a not musical circle, that I was anything particular in music — whether such talent as I have deserved to have everything else put aside for it. And now I know it does deserve it! The greatest musical genius I know has seen my work and so to speak has given it his blessing, and it is well with me . . . !

Don't think, mother darling, that this makes me lose my head, that I fancy I have only to put pen to paper and become famous. It is just this: men who have lived among musicians all their lives, who have been hand in glove with Schumann and Mendelssohn, and are so with Brahms and Rubenstein, say they seldom saw such talent, in a woman *never*, and I can but tell *you* all this. I know though that years and years, perhaps, of hard work are before me, years in which little or nothing I do shall be printed — this I have resolved on — and in which I shall be nobody, and at the end of which is *perhaps* a laurel crown awaiting me in the shape of a name! But the end is worth the uphill struggle, and if application and hard steady work can do anything I ought to get it.

I go up every day into the mountain and compose. Then to the von Milde I go a good deal, and am very welcome I think — so it seems! Then we go up to the meadows and play croquet, and then up to where Henschel lives and sing, sing, sing! Oh, those three!

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Thekla is not in good voice, but Meine Koenigin, alias Fraeulein Redeker, is in first-rate voice, and the music we have simply defies description. She is at this moment wandering about in a pink dressing-gown singing *Scenas* out of an opera of Rubinstein's, and it is rather distracting.



It is a glorious voice and won't be kept in. She is literally bubbling over with singing. Yesterday all four of them sang for a charity in the church, but I never do care for sacred music except, oh! I must except, the bass duet, "The Lord is a Man of War," which is certainly a grand thing. Henschel sang it with Santley at the Handel Festival. . . .

Please send on my accounts to Papa! My German gets on A₁, I always speak it, even to the Scotch girls. . . .

(6)

Friedrichsroda: August 19, 1877.

. . . Fancy, staying in the house with Henschel is your old Wildbad friend, Herr von Roumanim; he raves about Mary! He is a pleasant man and bade me remember him most kindly and respectfully to my Frau Mutter and Fraeulein Schwester! Also I was to tell you that now he wears his hair long, not like a tooth-brush, as when you knew him.

I have had several talks with Henschel about my music and am most awfully happy about it. He thinks more of my talent than ever I did! and has written about me to Brahms with whom he was almost brought up, and to Simrock, the publisher. It is so glorious to be told by competent persons that one's future lies in one's own hands, that the material for realising hopes I hardly ever — I think never — breathed at home even, is there; and I have but to work hard and steadily and then *not be too soon pleased with myself*. Every day I become more and more convinced of the truth of my old axiom, that why no women have become composers is because they have married, and then, very properly, made their husbands and children the first consideration. So even if I were to fall des-

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perately in love with BRAHMS and he were to propose to me, I should say no! So fear not that I shall marry in Germany! I told Henschel my opinion, and he said perhaps I was right, but as he himself has, I am told, an "unglueckliche Liebe" ² on hand, I don't think he is a judge! He is so good to me, corrects my songs for me (I have composed lots more) sets me basses on which to construct chorales and all sorts of things; and yet I know if I were Henschel it would be a great pleasure to me to get hold of a new pupil to give a friendly shove-on to during a three weeks' do-nothing stay in a little primitive town. . . . I am, as always, very, very happy and oh so well. . . .

(7)

Leipzig: August 22, 1877.

. . . Your dear letters are so very welcome; I think of you I don't know how many times in the day, and like to think that if your third daughter is giving you a great deal of trouble, the time *may* come when you will be proud of her. Do you remember I told you I should be just as all the rest in the Conservatorium, that we were treated like prisoners, known only by our *numbers* so to speak? Well, it is so, but here am I, not yet entered and yet known to the first masters! Is not that something to be pleased at! . . . I heard "Euryanthe" the other day and was much bored. I do *not* rave over Weber, but have not yet heard "Freischuetz." . . . I do hope Papa will send me some money soon. I know you will be pleased to hear that for want of time I must give up violin and devote myself to piano. . . .

Mother darling, as I always wanted to learn to swim, and as when once you *do* swim, swimming baths are much cheaper than others, I have begun learning it. The whole course of teaching costs 9s. however long it lasts, and then 3s. tip to the teacher. You can then bathe every day for 3s. 9d. a quarter, whereas in the other baths bathing twice a week costs nearly £1 a quarter. So in the end it is cheaper. If, however, you think this unnecessary I have still enough of the £5 papa gave me on my departure to pay for it, so please, mother darling, tell me what you think.

There seems every prospect of Mr. Ewing coming here for a few

² Unfortunate attachment.

Impressions that Remained

days in November or December; I wish she could come too. . . . Maas has set me a sonata to write!!! I have done the first three movements, and very ugly two are.

(8)

September 9, 1877.

. . . The swimming is going on famously. On the third day I was in a great fright as a certain Frau Doktor who began with me could do it better than I, and as you know, owing to my muscularity, I generally do athletic sports better than most women. However, on the fourth day I balanced myself on the end of a sofa while Frau Professor, who is not small, sat at the other end, and flourished arms and legs to such advantage that the next day I swam, with a cord, all round the bath several times, and the Frau Doktor was plunging about like a porpoise, swallowing pails of water, and leaving nothing to be seen above water but an agitated pair of heels going like a semaphore. Now I have beaten her all to smash, and small credit to me, as she is about 150, I should think, and goes about on dry land in a muslin cap with sort of butterfly bows in yellowish-red. I discovered to my intense astonishment that she lives in this very house, is in fact Herr Maas's landlady. One day when I went for my lesson I heard her scuttling down the passage and the banging of a door half-way up the same, so being versed in the ways of the Fatherland I stood still and waited, and sure enough out comes the head, yellow bows and all, is half withdrawn, and then I am recognised, and out dashes the Frau Doktor in Schlaf-rock and curl-papers, and you can imagine what an affecting meeting we had. . . .

I send you a photograph of myself that I had done for fun with my hair down; the rude Henschel said: "Sehr huebsch als Bild, auch als Photographie, aber Sie muessen mir zugeben dass Sie nicht so huebsch sind!" * I told him he had never seen me with my hair down and that that made all the difference!!

There are two or three things in Germans that I should like to alter; as regards men, that they smoke the vilest cigarettes and spit so *recklessly*. As regards the women, they have got it into their heads that the fashionable and *chic* thing to do is to scratch all their

* Very pretty as picture, but you must admit you are not as pretty as that!

hair up on the "bend of the head" I used to talk so much about, and then plant a very fly-away hat at the extreme back of the erection. You would scream at the fashions and the attempts at something very killing, particularly in the theatre. As regards both sexes, I wish one could impress upon them that it is possible to walk in the town without banging against every soul you meet. I can't describe to you how unmannerly everyone is, bar the students, in this respect. At first I made way for people and fancied that everyone I met was in a great hurry and must be excused. But finding that my whole walk became a perpetual hopping on and off the pavement, like a canary between two perches, I resolved to do in Rome as the Romans do; since then, thanks to the muscular development of which I am so proud and to which I now give full play, I have most exhilarating walks. . . .

How splendidly the Russians are doing, but the Turks, too, are doing wonders. Perhaps this war will raise the tone in Turkey supposing Turkey wins, but then it is the tone of the upper classes in Turkey that wants raising, and war won't affect them so much as the people. . . . Poor France! But how like the French to quarrel over Thiers' body and come to blows over the funeral! . . . I am going to-day to hear "Tannhaeuser"; it will be most interesting after seeing the Wartburg with my own eyes. On Tuesday and Thursday GREAT TREATS are in store for me, for I am to hear "Don Giovanni" (in German) and "Il Flauto Magico" for the first time! The other day I saw the great Marie Geistinger in Schiller's "Maria Stuart." The Geistinger was such a Maria as one dreams of. She is very, very beautiful, and, oh, how she acts! I always wept when I read that play; even the stony, tearless Mary wept at Miss D—'s, I remember, when we read it! So you may imagine how I howled in the theatre! Geistinger's voice is so wonderful — deep and thrilling — and she has more jewels they say than Patti. In one piece she plays in next week she wears them all nearly. She is equally good in comedy, but then there are many first-rate comedy players, and I don't think many can play tragedy like the Geistinger. She is a Baroness by birth and by marriage, and became an actress — *a real actress*, not a Lady Sebright — from sheer love of it, and her husband stands in the wings! I am sure to meet her at the Brockhauses. They are great people here, have a splendid

Impressions that Remained

house, and hold court of all the talent of the stage and studio in the town. Thanks, thanks, thanks for the "J" pens. . . .

(9)

Place de Repos, Treppe G. III, Leipzig: September 16, 1877. . . . Haven't the French a delicious expression about people wearing "ribbons," for instance, "that *swear*"? I often think of that when I see a Teuton arrayed in her Sunday best, strolling — no, German ladies can't stroll — either jiggling or stalking down the Promenade. I am going to-night to see Marie Geister in "*Adrienne Lecouvreur*," translated into German of course. I daresay you know the piece. Adrienne was one of Rachel's great parts — and from what I've read of Rachel I should think the Geister could do all Rachel's rôles. I nearly had a fit to-day on hearing she is nearly 50!!!! She has the movements, figure, and voice of a girl! Of her face one can of course not judge; and this wonderful creature is here for four years! It is very delightful. . . .

I am a little behindhand with my work this week and must make up before Wednesday. I am so glad Violet can do back-handed half-volleys. She should practise against the house, and tell her that I don't mean that she and Nina shall beat me when I come! Darling Mother — the picture that always hangs on the wall of my memory is summer, and home again! I must be very careful of £ s. d. — and if at the last minute it should be found better for me not to come home, I will not grumble. But it is a long time hence! . . . Local news interests me immensely! *More* "J" pens!!! . . .

(10)

September 23, 1877. . . . It is (or has been) freezing here, and yesterday for the first time I started the stove! As you know, there are no fireplaces in Germany. I was horribly frightened of it, for when first lit it groans in a most alarming way, but it is, as a matter of fact, quite harmless. The heat these stoves throw out is enormous, and the room warms in about five minutes as completely as if there had been a fire there all day; but the nuisance is that unless you wish to be frizzled up with heat you must put on very little coal, and keep on

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so doing about every half-hour. This makes me rather wild, but for a person living the sort of life I do here it is much better to have a thing like a stove that acts at once than a fire. I let out the stove (which retains its heat all night) at 7.30 (supper-time), and it is then laid all ready for lighting next day. In the morning I fly out of bed at 5.30 and apply a match thereto (unlike a fire it always burns when once lit!!), get into bed again, set the alarum on half an hour, and when I get up at six the room is warm and the little pot of water I placed on the stove boiling — so that I am sure of hot water to wash in (all Germans wash in cold, all winter through, and this I am sure is a key to the inadequacy of the performance!!). . . .

The great Sonata is finished!! That is, I am putting a touch or two to the last movement (a Rondo), but by my next lesson on Wednesday all will be ready. Maas is very complimentary about it, and I myself am pretty well satisfied with the latter movements — more because I feel now I am getting into working easily in the harness of form than because I think the Sonata itself particularly good. Three weeks ago I never could have believed it possible for me to launch out at once upon and bring to a satisfactory conclusion a piano work like a Sonata, and it is so encouraging to find a mountain melt into a mole-hill when you commence to scale it! The week after next is the “Aufnahme Pruefung,” when all the new pupils have to enter the Conservatorium and play before the Directory — in fact, show off! Maas says I am to play the Sonata!! and as it is difficult I am now studying it with him! This will be a great recommendation for me at the outset of my career within those newly whitewashed walls.

After all I am not particularly quick at swimming nor the reverse, but about average! Fat people learn quickest, as they float better and have more leisure to think about making the movements properly. Those who, like me, have heavy bones and a thin, muscly frame, have at first greatest difficulty in keeping afloat but make the best swimmers in the end, and can dive, etc., better. I enjoy the Schwimm-Bassin immensely. The other day I came rather early — the gentlemen were not yet out — so I sat in the lobby and chatted with the swimming mistress and her two daughters, and said it was a great pity they had no piano there (in Germany you

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always find a well-tuned piano in all waiting-rooms and restaurants, etc., etc. At this moment in came a tall woman in black, who owns the whole "Sophienbad" and hearing my remark entreated me to come upstairs and play on her piano. So I did, and sang away like fun. They were enchanted of course!!! and begged me to be "too early" as often as possible. . . .

O Mother! now that the cold weather is coming I sometimes get a sort of sick feeling — "Hunting"!! — But one can't have everything, and if you have got what is best in life you can't expect to have what is second-best as well!

Rubinstein comes in November, also Schumann. Krebs next month!! Joachim also! Glory! . . .

(11)

To Nina Smyth

Tuesday evening, October 9.

. . . First I must tell you a proud moment is drawing near for me! In the Conservatorium you must have cards, as almost every interview with the "heads" must be prefaced by a sending up of your card. This is natural, as people of all nations are at the Conservatorium, and the names of 300 pupils are not easy to learn off by heart. My dear — there are two real live mulattos and one nigger here! The negress (for she is of the "fair" sex) is by way of being a great dresser. Nature manages her hair of course (and I'm sure no art could manage it), but she affects long gold ear-rings and most skittish bonnets, and wears gloves on all occasions. I suppose she forgets her face, and thinks that then no one'll see her hands. Then we've got a Norwegian with a red cap and tassel who parades about in a cassock and altogether is not unlike Uncle Charles; and three fire-worshippers who wear chimney-pot hats with no brims (sort of busbies made of top-hat material) and flowing robes like Papa's military cape, only more so. But I am wandering from my subject — I meant to show it was not unbridled vanity, nor reckless expenditure on my part, that caused me to order — 100 visiting cards for 1s. 3d. with my name and address!!!! If ever there was a peacock I am that peacock, almost as grand as you will be when you can read writing. . . . I'm going to send home *such* a sausage to Mama by Mr. Ewing — it's like the most beautifully delicate

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forced meat you ever tasted. Mary would eat a whole one at a sitting I fancy. . . . I don't think I ever appreciated the necessity of temporary spinsterhood (at any rate, if not total) to certain kinds of lives, till I came here!! You may rely upon that and fear no brother-in-law. . . .

P.S. — I fear there's no chance of the contingency Violet suggests — that I should tire of Leipzig and come home before my year!

(12)

To My Mother

October 26 (approx.), 1877.

. . . It was so funny this morning — I had been dreaming that I was at home and showing you the new hat I have bought, and you were saying: "Well, it looks a great deal better on the head than in the hand"!! when I awoke. I have so often dreamed at home that I was in Leipzig, that this morning, before I knew where I was, I found myself feeling the wall and staring round the room to see if I was in my bed at home or here. I saw that the wall was brown and said to myself "then I must be in Leipzig," and dozed off again. In fact often now I wonder if I shan't "come to myself" in my bed at home and find I've had a fever or something, like people in books!! The work over that counterpoint told on me a little — tho' the only symptoms are generally sleepiness and disinclination to compose. Of course I took that latter very easily, as often at home I felt "is it possible that I, who to-day feel like a doll with a mashed turnip for a brain, ever composed?" The inclination always comes again and *en effet* returned to me yesterday when I got on a bit with my new "Geistinger Sonata" and wrote a song. (The first sonata is dedicated of course to you, Mother darling.)

The story of the Geistinger Sonata is indeed a queer one — it was begun last Sunday. I had already begun to feel "verstimmt" and unimaginative — when . . .

[Here follows an account of my calling on the Geistinger as described in the text, but of course the slight feeling of disillusionment is not mentioned.]

. . . You can imagine the effect of this visit! I came home, felt

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another creature, and forthwith composed I think the best thing I have yet done — the skeleton of a “first movement” of a new sonata. It is really programme music, though no one would know it! I have the whole scene there — going up the stairs, the “Herzklopfen” at the door, and all!! When it is finished I have secured the services of the best player in the Conservatorium to play it at the Abendunterhaltung. But that may be ages hence. I haven’t filled up the first movement yet and don’t feel at all in a “sonata” mood at present. I shall show it to Reinecke next Thursday.

The counterpoint master is always urging me to make the acquaintance of some girl who sings well, and get her to sing some of my songs in the Abendunterhaltung. I always put it off but must see about it this week. It’s rather a horrid thing to have to do, but as everyone does it I may as well! . . . I could *not* read *all* of your last letter!! The ink was bad. . . .

(13)

October 1877.

. . . Ever so many thanks for your letter, but do you know, Mother darling, it took me more than 20 minutes to read it and almost half a page is still a mystery to me. Do ask Papa to give that horrid cheap blue paper to the children, who write with spider-leg pens, and whose letters are almost readable even when written on that paper. But you write large and black, and it’s utterly impossible to make out half your letters unless you wrote on only one side of the paper, and in the end that would be false economy. When Aunt Judy wrote to me from Frimhurst she had to write so, as her hand is also very black. If you write on blue Frimhurst paper, I only get such a short letter, and as one depends a good deal upon letters from home surely he could get some other paper? You see I am rather sore on this subject!! as I have already sent two fruitless appeals to Papa!!! . . .

Last night at the Chamber Music (do you remember at Aunt Louisa’s that day our discussion about the “Chamber pieces”!) Saint-Saens, the great French composer, who besides that is the greatest player I ever heard, bar Rubinstein (though probably he is not so many-sided if one knew him as well), played — and was called back nine times — and played two encores at the end of all

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things for the benefit of the Conservatorists, who went utterly wild over him, and (when he was here a month ago) sent him a testimonial!! When Saint-Saens drove away, such a row you never heard. They wanted to take the horses out, and drag him home — luckily for him however (as he was undoubtedly hungry) his coachman drove on at the first cry of “Spannt die Pferde ab!!” * (While I have been sitting writing this letter at my window, which looks out on the Promenade about 100 yards away, I’ve seen three dwarfs go by!!! This will give you an idea of the number in Germany. It’s horrid.) . . .

(14)

November, 1877.

. . . Poor Professor Brockhaus (brother of my friend) has died of that horrible disease “trichinosis,” caused by the existence of little animals in pigs — which (when the diseased pigs are made into a particular kind of sausage, eaten almost raw) remain alive in the sausage and eat up the inside of the poor person who has taken that particular sort. With the Professor they settled in the lungs and behind his eyes, so that he first became blind and then died a most painful death. There have been but two instances of death from trichinosis — which is not generally dangerous — but lots of people are ill. Luckily I hate that sort of *Wurst*, and only tasted it once about three months ago, at which time the pigs weren’t infected. Now, no Schweinefleisch is eaten in Leipzig — we might be Israelites! . . .

(15)

December, 1877.

. . . Now that the winter is coming on I go a great deal in Gesellschaft, and find that far from making me disinclined to work it gives one a fresh impetus thereto. For of late I have been overworking myself a little and have in consequence been catching it from Frau Brockhaus and her mother-in-law! Hearing so much music “greift so furchtbar an” ⁵ as they say here (a very pithy expression). To these Gesellschafts one goes either in ordinary evening dress or in a high dress — like the tussore and blue. Thus the Ascot dress will be most useful, and as it will be worn only by candlelight do you

⁴ Take out the horses.

⁵ Takes a lot out of you.

Impressions that Remained

think the fadedness matters? As it is such a, to Germans, marvelous make, if you cannot get it dyed in England without taking it to pieces, they do them here whole very well and cheaply. Also, Mother darling, would you send me one or two of my long petticoats — petticoat bodices I fancy I have with me — at the bottom of the box among my summer things. If you can, do send the Ascot dress with the other things, as that will come in so useful.

Towards Christmas, darling Mother, I get Heimweh ⁶ too, and I think oh so often of home and you all. I wish they'd be quick and set up a telephone between Farnborough and Leipzig! But the person who in every way tries to fill the place of Mother to me — who interests herself for me and gives herself more trouble on my account than I can describe to you — who scolds me and tells me I am hopelessly childish and inexperienced — who tells me what to do and what not to do — and who I do believe is getting fond of me — is Frau Edouard Brockhaus of whom I shall always speak as "Frau Doctor" (her husband is a B.A.). Through her I have an *entrée* into all the best houses in Leipzig and "move in the circles" (vide Calverley!) after a fashion that would delight Herr Schloesser's heart!! But what I prize more than anything I get through her is her friendship and guardianship. I can go to her beautiful house and sit there and talk to her whenever I have time. I tell her everything I have been after, and whom I have seen, and she always tells me she feels responsible for me! I am indeed in luck to have her for a friend.

Marie Geistinger has returned at last! I was told by someone who had seen her arrival in Leipzig that she left the station in five cabs — one for herself, maid and dog, and four others "lauter Koffer"!! ⁷). The extensive Garde-robe of course! The other day I met the Director of the Stadt Theater and his wife (great swells) at a party, and that's nice, for if they took a fancy to one, you meet all sorts of interesting people there — including the Geistinger perhaps. . . .

Thank you, Mother darling, so immensely for your photo of Hugo — most excellent — but what I want is one of my beauteous Mother. To-day by Frau Dr. B.'s desire I took her all the photos I have of my family, but yours I wouldn't take, as I do so hate to show people such a vile likeness. . . .

⁶ Homesickness.

⁷ Nothing but trunks.

December 16, 1877.

My darling Mother, — I've got such a lot to tell you I hardly know where to begin. (I instantly make a large blot down below by way of prologue!) I think I shall keep the best part — the musical — for the end and instantly launch into the dissipations I have been indulging in.

I have told you that my dear Frau Dr. Brockhaus holds all Conservatorists in greatest abhorrence, and I believe she'd like me never to speak with any of them! However, there I strike and say one must be friendly with the girls in one's class. Well, her great idea is that by planting me firmly in *her* society (and anyone *protégée*d by her is always kindly treated) I shall escape the shoals and quicksands of Bohemianism in the Conservatorium. So I have now been introduced to all the swells in Leipzig — yesterday I wound up with the Limburgers (German Consul) and Baroness Tauchnitz, a dear very handsome old lady about as tall as Mrs. Oswald Smith. In consequence of this I got an invitation to the "Professorium" — an entertainment given by the Professors of the University. It consists in the following. You dress yourself as for a small dance in England (I had to put on my black, and Indian scarf, as the floor was said to be dirty and I didn't want to spoil my green silk). The proper thing is for all young girls to go in white, and (bones, red elbows and all) "ausgeschnitten."⁸ Frau Dr. wanted me to do so, but I rebelled and said I couldn't turn German all at once, and that people would say on seeing my black gown (quite unheard-of for girls here!) "Eine Engländerin" and pass on. Well, first of all you enter the ball-room and find it filled with rows of chairs arranged in circles — and at the one end a little *daïs* and thereon a table. When all have arrived, one of the Professors mounts the *daïs* and delivers an address — sometimes long and stupid — sometimes (then for instance) short and sweet. After this is over a scene of the wildest confusion ensues, for suddenly — apparently from the bowels of the earth, like the demons in the last act of "Don Giovanni" — the room is filled with waiters bearing long tables with which they clear the course, and then follows supper. It consists chiefly in waiting

⁸ *Décolletée*.

Impressions that Remained

for the next course, but is pleasant on the whole. When this is over the rooms are cleared again and dancing begins. Everything is managed by an omnipotent "M.C." and the dance opens with a Polonaise, *i.e.* a long procession is formed two and two, and then off we go round and round the room, describing all manner of curious evolutions like a big sea-serpent. The Polonaise lasts till the band has had enough of it — and then comes a Valse.

Oh, Mother, I could weep over the waltzing! Any one of my partners would have been turned out of an English ball-room as dangerous. You know how I like to dance — very, very slowly and quietly, in perfect time, beginning at the beginning of the dance, and going on to the end without turning a hair!! Well, imagine me seized upon and whirled round the room, often on the floor, often in mid-air, never at a less rate than 16 miles an hour. Your partner hops nearly up to the ceiling and unless you want all your teeth knocked out you must hop too. No sooner have you pantingly implored to stop a minute than up comes another gentleman and begs for an "extra tour." Off you fly again, once round the room, and are delivered over to your original partner who whirls you off again without further delay. If another couple cross the course you promptly send them spinning out of the way (how that used to annoy me at home when any daring partner did such a thing; here no one minds aching shin bones, bruised arms, and loosened teeth — I declare mine felt quite loose at the end of the ball). Everyone bangs, pushes, hops, kicks, and jumps with all the good humour in the world and the rather elderly professors are quite as game as the students. Well, after the valse come quadrilles (something like ours), Tyroliennes (sort of Mazurka — where to hop up to the clouds is *the* thing), galops (where to shoot along the room straight-forward as if you were skating is *the* thing), and polkas (where to behave as much like a dangerous lunatic as possible is *the* thing); also two or three "ingeschobene" or extra vales are danced. You may ask, did I not collapse completely before the ball was over? — particularly when I tell you that there is *no* refreshment table and that it is only with great difficulty that you can procure a glass of raspberry vinegar (which I abhor!). I should certainly have collapsed did not my nationality come to my aid. It is quite unusual to sit and rest between the dances. Directly the dance is over your

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partner conducts you back to your chaperone, and at that instant up comes your next partner and claims you. You then walk about for perhaps ten minutes, no idea of *sitting*. The theory is that sitting makes you so tired! I pleaded however that in England it was the custom, and that I should have to be borne home on a stretcher if I didn't sit! Next day I was utterly helpless, so was Mrs. Forster.

Have I spoken to you about the Forsters? . . . a young couple who are here for two years. She is a daughter of the celebrated Mrs. Benyon, *chère amie* of Robert Browning (I pointed both out to you that night in Tenterden Street, when Browning got in such a rage with the man who pushed). Mrs. Forster I often saw — she was there too and has a face one doesn't forget. Her husband is studying at the University here, and she amuses herself at the Conservatorium. She had a letter of introduction to Mrs. Brockhaus also, so it's very jolly. We go about to these places a good deal together and are very fond of each other. Mrs. Brockhaus declares that some balls are coming to which I *must* go "*ausgeschnitten*" and ought to go in white. As I have no white dress here I *can't* go in white, but might have my two dresses, the black and green, cut down low very easily — *qu'est-ce que tu en dis?*

Now for the musical part! I now have two composition lessons during the week, and yesterday, for the first time, I took some things to Jadassohn (whose new symphony has just been given in the Gewandhaus with much applause). I think I have told you there are but three girls in the Conservatorium besides myself who compose. Well — Jadassohn just said what Henschel and the others said. . . . It has come round to me that he gives out that I am the only really talented composeress he has met in his whole life. . . . I am waiting in great excitement for my box from home. I quite forget what evening dresses I had. If there are any in good repair — *very* good, for Frau B. has eyes like a lynx — please send them, Mother darling. I think all my ball-dresses were danced out! . . .

(17)

December 21, 1877.

My own darling Mother, — I have written in all 12 Xmas letters! (8 to home people!) and now as a *bonne bouche* write my letter

Impressions that Remained

to you. Mother darling, I wish you knew how much I am thinking of you all. I don't think you've been out of my thoughts one hour ever since the Xmas season came in, and as Xmas Day draws near I feel more and more the many miles there are between us. A very, very happy Christmas to you, Mother darling, and a bright New Year. Your dear note, announcing the despatch of the box, just arrived. I will tell Frau B. that you would rather I did not go *décolletée* and I'm sure there'll be no difficulty about it. The beautiful white dress will do for Baroness Tauchnitz's grand party on the 14th. It sounds much too good for a ball, and certainly shall not be worn at one. . . .

I'm very busy now over a four-part chorale — any amount of Contrapunkt therein. Reinecke himself got quite interested in me last Thursday and set me my work himself, and I told you what Jadassohn (with whom I now also have composition lessons) said of me! Fancy, I am the only woman in the whole Conservatorium who has ever been promoted to composition lessons from Reinecke!! I only lately found that out, and feel two inches taller ever since!!

You know, Mother darling, I am going to send *my* presents at Easter by the Binnings, but I can't resist despatching a box of the wonderful German confectionery only to be got at Christmas. I shan't tell you what they are (except that they are mostly "marzipan" or whatever you call that stuff that tastes like the almond on wedding-cake), but though they look too awful, fear not. They are from the renowned Wilhelm Felsche, Hof Conditorei in Berlin (to the German Emperor), Vienna (to the Austrian Emperor), Dresden and Leipzig (to the Saxon King), and so on — more renowned than Fortnum & Mason. But as soon as you've tasted them you'll know if they are good or not!

I've been studying the Rondo in my first Sonata (yours) and at last have managed to master it after a fashion, as I suppose I shall have to play something — and that's a taking sort of thing. You will be pleased to hear that despite my musically unorthodox tendencies the first violin in the Gewandhaus orchestra, old Röntgen, said "that Rondo thema is so pure and fresh, that I could almost swear it was Mozart"!! I have set my pet poem of Shelley:

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*"My soul is an enchanted boat
Which like a sleeping swan doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing," etc.*

but am not satisfied with it (as is Jadassohn!). It is hard to write up to such words.

To-morrow we shall be skating. Last night there were 20 degrees of frost and all day there have been 10 degrees, but the German police are really *too* cautious. However, everyone says this frost will last, as it came so gradually. . . . My darling Mother, I wish, I wish I could be with you for Xmas, but it's no good wishing what can't be, and all the telephones in the world couldn't bring me nearer to you than I shall be in thought all next week.

Your ever devoted child.

(18)

December 1877.

. . . Our holidays last till Wednesday next; however I began composing a new Sonata yesterday, and mean to finish writing out the Geistinger Sonata to-night. I'll never write anything in C# minor again! The slightest modulation, even into the next key (G# minor) involves no end of double sharps, and the writing out is simply fearful! The second movement is undoubtedly the best thing I've done yet though Reinecke will persist in saying the third is "better work"!! But really with skating and Xmas week together I'm perpetually on the go. I've been skating hard and, you will be happy to hear, am the best lady skater in Leipzig. I never saw anything like the women here. *Very* few can do the outside edge — and as for cutting figures!! . . . The German gentlemen are much struck of course, and think the English women a more wonderful race even than they did before! I think somehow or other I have improved very much in my skating, though I've not skated for the last two winters, seeing that we've had no ice at home! I go and practise when the pond is empty — at 9 a.m. — and can do lots of queer things now. . . .

. . . I had great fun at the Rudolf B.'s (up above the Ed. B.'s). They had a sort of dinner at 1.30, and after dinner we all went

Impressions that Remained

into the smoking-room (generally in German houses the last of a suite of 4 or 5, so that one can wander in and out at will) and according to student fashion each one sang a song followed by chorus! I had to conduct and was given the feather broom (with which the Italian curiosities I told you about are dusted) as bâton! Afterwards I went down quietly to the Ed. B.'s and we did music. Both the eldest sons who are now home on leave are very musical — respectively sing bass and tenor, and play violin and cello. We did Haydn's trios and sang quartettes of Mendelssohn and Schumann at sight, and I sang with obligato accompaniment, and altogether it was very nice. That's what is so nice about Germany; almost everyone you meet can take a part in a vocal quartett. . . . I'm rather sorry Frau Dr. and the Forsters don't hit it off so very well. Mrs. F. is a great dear, but a little heavy, and wanting in a most essential point, social talent. I mean she doesn't help to make a party go off well, and though she enjoys herself thoroughly doesn't manage to produce that impression! I see Frau Dr. is a little impatient of that particular failing as she herself is so very much the other way. Mr. Forster is fearfully English and finds very little here to his taste, and though I think he tries hard to be cosmopolitan, he can't help showing some of the "Oh! bother! let's go home!" sort of feeling that besets him so continually! I'm very glad I am of a plastic nature, as plastic natures seem to get so much more fun out of life than stolid ones. . . .

(19)

January 13, 1878.

. . . The Gewandhaus ball was grand fun, very swell. The wife of the Castellan of the Conservatorium had charge of the ladies' room and the respect I am now treated with by the menials and officials in the Conservatorium is most killing. The day after, when I "re-sumed my studies," all those I met enquired with great *empressement* if I had found it agreeable! . . .

I think Frau Dr. B. must feel me rather a responsibility, as firstly I am English, and secondly, I suppose, in the mere fact of the passion that brings me here, not quite like all girls. But I take a real pleasure in pleasing her and now she calls me "Du" and is very dear altogether. . . .

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. . . I say most unhesitatingly that German beds are the most comfortable in the world. In the winter, if you're a quiet sleeper, springs underneath and feathers (not too many) on the top of you is glory. . . .

The whole river is frozen over, and we are going to make a party and skate down to Connewitz, a village 4 or 5 miles from here — won't it be fun! Frau B. and other elders drive down — meet us there — and we all take tea together at a hotel — but I doubt whether this plan will come off, even if the frost lasts. Skating plans never do come off somehow. . . .

(20)

January 24, 1878.

. . . I am so much distressed that I can't go on working away at my string quartett. My master was so pleased with the first movement. He's been telling lots of people about it, and there it lies, and I haven't the faintest inspiration to go on with it, thanks to this seediness! However, inspiration is a thing that comes and goes like the wind, and one hasn't the remotest idea when and where it will spring up. . . . I do hope my letter to Papa reached and that funds are *en route*. It will be too unpleasant to go penniless into a new *pension*. My address henceforth is Salomon St. 19. That is easy to remember! Solomon spelt with an "a." . . .

(21)

Salomonstrasse 19: Early February, '78.

. . . I have to sing my songs everywhere (my voice is in very good form at present, for it!). But do you know I never felt more utterly hopelessly distrustful of myself and ashamed of myself than I do now. I can hardly help saying straight out in people's faces what I do say in so many words: "Oh yes, that's all very fine, but the question is, will my talent stand cultivation?" Years only can prove that question, for till one is through one's studies and has all one's material there, one cannot tell if one has profited by those studies and can use and shape that material. . . . I *am* sorry about the ferns! I can so well imagine how you went into the porch, with your long Schleppe⁹ sweeping into the small pools of water that always were

⁹ Train.

Impressions that Remained

there in the morning, and discovered that the ferns were dead! But I do hope they will revive. . . . Has Papa told Curtis to sit up straight on the box and to drive less like the ratcatcher!!! I do hope his gout is better.

(22)

Late in February, '78.

. . . I waited till to-day to write to you for I wanted to tell you about last night. I was invited to a dinner party at one of the standard Leipzig houses (Brockhaus, Frege, Limburger, Tauchnitz and Lampe) on purpose to meet Mendelssohn's daughter, Frau Prof. Wach, who, it was prophesied, would take a great deal of interest in me. She is one of the sweetest, most charming little women I ever saw, very pretty and gentle, and has just that charm of manner that made her father so beloved. She is very like him in face — and also exactly like someone we know very well, but I can't think whom. I sang about 12 songs of my own! one after the other and got more petting even than usual! for the whole company was musical and glad to welcome a new "Collegin." Frau Wach was too nice and begged me to come and see her as soon as ever I could, so did some people I've been dying to know for ages but hadn't met before. Brahms stayed with them when he was here. Their name is von Herzogenberg. She is quite lovely — a great musician — very learned — a daughter of the Hanoverian Minister in Berlin, Baron Stockhausen. The Tauchnitz were also there, and the Limburgers, with whom I have lately become very intimate — and where probably my string quartett will be played, if it is finished, before Easter. . . .

The children of this house are very ill brought up, and the second day of my arrival the second, aged four, whose perseverance and straight eye cannot be too highly commended, threw a reel of cotton, half a roll, and the handle of a earthenware teapot, one after the other, at my head, despite vehement remonstrance on my part between each volley. Eventually I rushed at the offender and commenced carrying her off to her mama, but she squalled so fearfully that I set her down very firmly on a chair and retired. Since then the infant has held me in great awe, but I heard her whispering to herself the other day, "Das Fräulein soll Kinder gar nicht

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gern haben, und junge Damen kann ich nicht leiden!!”¹⁰ I nearly burst out laughing — the child is really clever, for though I was distinctly meant to hear what it said, it looked perfectly unconcerned as if it were soliloquising in solitude!!! . . .

I wish you could see me dancing now, hopping up to the ceiling, arriving on the tips of my toes, looking well over the right shoulder, blowing into the face of my partner, and receiving in exchange many a blast from him — and above all, my left hand not laid on his arm but curled elegantly round, fingers inward, as if a photographer had arranged them!! Onward I fly, backwards, forwards, round the wrong way, and am considered a wonderful dancer!! How I long for a Mr. Young with a long, shooting, easy step (like Paddy’s trot 10 years ago) that one can keep up from the beginning of the dance to the end. . . .

(23)

March, ’78.

. . . I had such fun the other day. I don’t know when I have laughed so much. There was a little *soirée* at the Brockhauses. As they live next door I couldn’t well get a cab (Salomon St. consists of large detached houses with gardens) but it was pouring weather and our garden was a perfect swamp. So what do you think I did? The children here have a very large perambulator on four wheels, and this was brought down from the loft. How I got in I don’t know, but it was such a tight fit that my knees were up to my nose, and I never got down as far as the seat but was wedged between the arms, tight! The whole head and all was then covered with a waterproof and, looking more like clothes coming from the wash than a human being, I was trundled along. I can’t tell you how nearly I was upset, as naturally I was too heavy to allow of the Maedchen handling the perambulator as they do generally (pressing the back and elevating the front wheels) and, with the four wheels to contend against, turning corners was perilous work. Just as I entered the portico, two guests arrived on foot whom I knew very well, and who could not make out who or what I was! One, a pompous old Hof-Capellmeister, nearly collapsed when I emerged gorgeous in

¹⁰ They say the Fräulein doesn’t like children — and I can’t bear young ladies.

Impressions that Remained

black and silver out of my vehicle. Since then I am fearfully chaffed and everyone wants to hire the "droshky von Frä. Smyth!"

By the bye, did I tell you what capital luck I've had about umbrellas? I (of course) lost my nice new silk one about four months after I came here — and to punish myself bought another for four shillings, which I condemned myself to carry about everywhere and which, of course, I did not lose! Well, one day I found in my room a very nice, nearly new, umbrella, mounted on a polished ash-plant — silk of course! Really, I have made most conscientious enquiries about this umbrella and it belongs to no one! and I, of course, have appropriated it! Isn't that splendid? I think perhaps it's Henschel's! It was about the time of his visit that it appeared!! . . .

(24)

March 16, 1878.

. . . Clipsie gives me blooming accounts of my lovely mother — says you looked splendid at the R.M.C. ball in grey silk and white lace and "so absurdly young!" When I come back it will be very delightful reproducing the old times — sailing into a ball-room with you — though, alas, I shan't know enough people to be detained one instant in the ante-room. . . .

The only thing I object to here is the disorder — the whole thing is what the Germans call a "liederliche Wirthschaft" ¹¹ — meals unpunctual — often too much salt in the bouillon — which is remarked upon every day but nothing comes of it. Then if a curtain gets torn it strikes no one to mend it — you know the sort of thing. One good point about our new landlord is, that he will have fresh roast meat every day, so no more of those wonderful stews and messes that, being in Germany, I always eat and now don't object to, but never shall like!!

. . . I think, Mother darling, I shall be able to pay dressmakers' and doctors' bills out of my songs. At least I shall try. If the money doesn't quite cover the sum it will nearly. Do tell Papa that as for the boots, really the 38s. is economy in the end. The other pair I had in December 1876 at 38s. are only just done for, and that through the skating chiefly — for those Acme skates ruin boots fearfully. I think next year I'd better have a cheap pair of boots made

¹¹ Hugger-mugger.

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here specially for skating at 12s.! The buttoned boots, single soled, I had before I left home are still like new and look lovely!

Now that the spring is here how I look forward to being at home! Coming back will be quite unlike anything else I ever experienced — and the most heavenly thing I have done in my life as yet — except perhaps when I began to know I hadn't come here in vain.

May you never have anything so fearfully puzzling and confusing to do as writing your first string quartett, Mother darling! My hair is growing grey over it! It will be finished before I come home — and in the meantime do look up 4 performers and we'll have a grand chamber-music performance in the drawing room! . . . I've lost my Counterpoint book and without it am as Samson shorn of his strength. . . .

(25)

April 9, '78.

. . . I am still, besides other work, working away at those songs to take to the printers to-morrow. They are pretty sure to take them as now they are so well known here. Whether they give me much for them is another question — or indeed anything! But I hope so. I went to a musical entertainment yesterday evening at the mother of Brahms's other great friend and, in spite of a little cough, did a great deal of singing, till I was forcibly removed from the piano by Frau Brockhaus, who wouldn't allow me to do anything more. I got latish to bed and am dead tired to-day. The weather is so horrid — it snows all day and yet is so warm that only about two inches remain on the ground, and the whole place is a perfect mash! Yesterday, knowing how I rave about Brahms, the daughter, Frau von Bezold, sought out a visiting card of his and hid it under the card with my name on! When I found it, they hunted up a piece of narrow pink tape to match my ribbons, and tied it round my neck! . . .

(26)

April, 1878.

. . . Just imagine what a goose I am. I went to Breitkopf and Haertel — the music publishers *par excellence* in the world. The nephew, who conducts the business, Dr. Hase, I know very well and he is quite one of the most charming men I ever met. But

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you know how unpleasant it is to do business with a personal friend! Well, he began by telling me that songs had as a rule a bad sale — but that no composeress had ever succeeded, barring Frau Schumann and Fräulein Mendelssohn, whose songs had been published together with those of their husband and brother respectively. He told me that a certain Frau Lang had written some really very good songs, but they had no sale. I played him mine, many of which he had already heard me perform in various Leipzig houses, and he expressed himself very willing to take the risk and print them. But would you believe it, having listened to all he said about women composers, and considering how difficult it is to bargain with an acquaintance, I asked no fee! Did you ever hear of such a donkey! I should have asked £2 10s., which would have dissolved one of the dressmaker's bills! So if, Mother darling, after all I have to come down on you for that bill (which I still hope not to do!) please consider it the price of my modesty! . . .

(27)

Sunday, April 7, 1878.

. . . I think, Mother darling, Frau Dr. would be very pleased if you wrote her a letter thanking her for her goodness to me and mentioning her letting me come for a few days to her in the country. Of course you would have written anyhow, but probably not till I came to England. If you wrote at once (very clearly!! but in English, of course!) she'd get it just before starting. She always takes such an interest in my home — and you specially — I can't talk to her too much about you all and my home-life. With most people one feels rather shy of "letting out" (as F— P— would say) on the subject. One always is afraid of boring them — but I never feel that with her, as I know that the more I tell her, the better she is pleased.

My newer friends, Baron von Herzogenberg and his fabulously beautiful wife (with a bad figure! the Tauchnitzes and Marie Geisinger are the only people in Leipzig with figures!) are very delightful. They hold very much aloof from Leipzig society — partly because in both is a rooted dislike, almost amounting to a horror, of dilettantism. She is absurdly musical and though she doesn't compose much (only songs), is the first feminine musical genius

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(bar Frau Schumann) that I have met. I suppose the fact that Joachim, Brahms, and Frau Schumann are their most intimate friends makes them so severe upon unthoroughness. In their presence I feel like a worm! . . . I mean because I write sonatas and string quartetts, and, goodness knows what all, when I can't do a proper canon or fugue (or indeed strict counterpoint very well). I have made gigantic progress, but not thorough progress. I have, in fact, made the tour of the world and don't know my own country thoroughly so to speak. . . .

(28)

Passion Week, 1878.

. . . The day before yesterday I made the acquaintance of a composer of Schumann's time, of whom Schumann prophesied almost as much as he did of Brahms. You see in the one case the prophecy came truer than in the other, for Kirchner never composed anything great, though his little things are beautiful. I used to play some of them. Fräulein Sitte will probably know his *Album Blätter* and *Acquarellen*. He is exactly like Mr. Ewing! As his life is, to a certain extent, a failure, he is a very bitter, intensely sardonic man — almost demoniacal. He spoke much of the industry of the English in the Conservatorium — how nearly all the ladies composed!! You can imagine how pleasant this was for me! and that I wasn't much disposed to obey his command (for command it was) to play to him. When I had done, he simply growled out: "Immer weiter! *Sie* duerfen componiren!"¹² People say this is fearfully much for Kirchner! After that he was most friendly and offered to see me home and goodness knows what! . . .

(29)

End of April, 1878.

. . . I had such a glorious time at Dresden with dear Frau Doctor, and I should have stayed there till the middle of this week (when she returns) were it not for a concert given by the Bach Verein, to which, as you know, I belong — and as the *alti* are weak and I can make a pretty good row in the chest notes now, back I came, upon the summons of the beautiful Frau von Herzogenberg.

¹² Go on! You may compose!

Impressions that Remained

. . . And now I must tell you all about my adventures, looking up Julia Finn.¹³ I searched out the name in the address book, found it in a not very nice street in Dresden, and, obtaining leave of absence from my hostess, sallied forth in search of a new cousin. I was shown into a drawing room, the decorations of which evidently aimed at English style (German drawing rooms are got up as English parlours at the seaside) but were of a somewhat gaudy, cheap description. Thought I to myself, "Louie's sister has not Louie's taste" and awaited with anxiety the arrival of Cousin Julia. My dear Mother, imagine my feelings when a small, dingy, eminently "respectable" person entered and asked me what I wanted!! Having previously asked the servant if Mrs. Finn was English and having received an affirmative answer — having also ascertained that there was but one Finn in the address book — I could not doubt but this was my cousin, though she bore no resemblance to Louie!! I advanced timidly and said, "I think you must be my cousin Julia." "Oh," answers the person, "I think yer must be makin' a mistake. Yer mean my sister-in-law, Miss Durrant as was, 'oose no longer in the town — lives in Blasewitz!" (a village about 3 miles from Dresden). I was rather shocked at this apparition, who begged me to wait till her 'usband came in. Presently, an equally dingy but well-meaning individual in black came in and informed me that "Aunt Julia" had removed from Dresden 2 years ago and that if I'd like to see her he'd be happy enough to accompany me out by tramway. The good soul (who lectures in German in Dresden and of whom I hope people think as much as he does of himself) accompanied me to the village and led me to a small cottage, out of which comes a stout, not so very ugly lady, greets him with a kiss and Louie's voice to 1/8th of a tone, and looks politely at me for information. I said, "I am Ethel Smyth," whereat she embraced me very warmly and said, "You dear child! I'm so glad to make your acquaintance," just as Louie would have said it. The brother-in-law said, "Well, I'm not wanted 'ere, so I'll say good-day," and we parted on the best of terms, and I think he is a capital old fellow, though shaky as to h's.

She carried me off indoors, made me stay to lunch of course, and

¹³ This was a first cousin of my mother who had eloped in her teens with her brother's tutor.

introduced me to her husband — a dear little man, also shaky as to h's, but much "finer," as the Germans say, than his brother. I think I had never pictured anyone more correctly to myself than I pictured her. She is very stout, has lost her eyebrows in some fever, and has corked herself rather crooked ones — otherwise no beautification, and a nice fresh complexion. Fringe like a door mat, also over the ears, so the effect is most . . . festive! On the top, a brilliant Paris bonnet, and a somewhat violent yellowish grey cape with ostrich feathers — this when she accompanied me home; in the house an infuriated looking mob cap crowns the edifice of brown hair. She has one awful daughter as black as coal and very Jewish looking, with an unwholesome looking complexion, and one jolly little son of 9. Both talk English with a strong German accent and rather stiffly, and are, of course, at home in German. I can't tell you how hearty and jolly she was and how glad she seemed to see me. I also was so glad to meet with a relative like the people I know in England — not like the awful Leipzig English. Her voice and manner are so like Louie's that I had a queer home-ish feeling when talking to her that I have not had since I left England.

I don't think for the whole 3 hours I was there we spoke of Germany or the present — but entirely of the past, and all about you. She could not tire of telling me about you and the old times, and I can't tell you with what a feeling I listened. She is the first person I ever met, with whom I had time to talk and opportunity of talking about you when you were young, and she enjoyed her task of narrator as thoroughly as I did mine of listener. It was all about you at Rackheath and Scottow — how beautiful you were — how you sang as no one else, except, perhaps, the Lind — how you were in all respects just her *beau idéal* (and everyone else's) of what a young lady should be — of how you had such masses of adorers, and how your behaviour to them was just what it ought to have been! She said you used to have singing days, on which you sang up and down stairs and all over the house, and that she had (if all this is true you will know better than I, for romancing runs in the Stracey blood, doesn't it?) a great passion for you and used to come up to your room when you were dressing for dinner and fasten on your bracelets — until one day, when she came upon you and Papa in a certain room of which she showed me the windows in a photo she

Impressions that Remained

has of Scottow! That same night, she says, when she was helping you to adorn, she said, deeply wounded and jealous: "Really, Cousin Nina, I can't think how you can kiss that man with red hair," whereat you boxed her ears and said, "How dared she speak so of your future husband!!!!!" She said you had such perfect manners and were so horrified (as indeed is to be expected) at some youth who, after asking you to take wine with him, shovelled up peas on his knife! She also related the tale of your saying, "My nose is like a torch!" She spoke much of the trios sung by you, her Mother (about whose flute-like voice she raves — I never knew Aunt Julia sang) and either Lady Robinson or Mrs. Burney-Petre. . . . Again, I say, the pleasure it was to me hearing all this is absolutely inexpressible, so much so that I don't care to tell you about Dresden and the glorious (gaudy) new Theatre, and the splendid performance of Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell." (The Picture Gallery was shut for cleaning up! Such a sell!) If I go again at Whitsuntide I'm of course to look her up. She told me to tell you she was delighted to see me, and that I was exactly like my father, only your eyes to a T! Whereat I demur, first of all my eyes are not half so good as my Mother's, and, secondly, they are quite a different sort of eye! Yours are oval — mine somewhat round! They all accompanied me in the ferry across the Elbe (Blasewitz is opposite Löschwitz — the village the "Berg" is in), and then walked with me till we got to the Berg. I was awfully pleased with her and very curious to hear what you say of her as she was in days gone by. She seemed rather hurt at never having heard of you till last year, but said she supposed that comes of living at Dresden. . . .

(30)

[NOTE. — *This letter was written by and dictated to Lisl, who was nursing me. Her own remarks are in italics.* — E. S.]

May 19, 1878.

My darling Mother, — Don't be alarmed at seeing a strange handwriting — I'm in bed, but not sick "unto death," my nerves have been rather knocked up for some time and now my unhappy heart has to bear the brunt of it. I have been sent to bed in order to reduce the palpitation and here may have to stay for a day or two longer, in all about a week. Don't think, Mother darling, that

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I have been left entirely on my own hook. I have been nursed during this week as well as I ever was in my life, both night and day, but as the instrument of my recovery happens to be writing this for me, I will tell you all about it when I can write to you myself. *The poor amanuensis is suffering severely from writing the accompanying!* And now, please Mother, listen attentively to what's coming. . . .

[N.B. — *Here follows a long account of my illness and of the restrictions to be observed in England.*]

Well, that's about all. It only remains to tell you not to be anxious about me. You'll find me looking as well as ever, and, alas, as inclined to gather the rosebuds while I may as of yore. I am fairly on the road to recovery and will get up to-morrow.

Ever your devoted child,

ETHEL.

Amanuensis cannot help saying that she enjoyed nursing your dear, dear child so very much; also she must assure you that you have not the least occasion more to be discomforted about Ethel.

[P.S. *privately added by me.*]

Mother darling, — The person who has written my letter to you and nursed me all through this illness more like a mother than anyone else is Frau von Herzogenberg. What she has been to me I can't tell you and I have known her hardly three months. It's queer that Frau Dr. isn't nursing me — but she is so good about it. I daren't write more, it's forbidden me. I can't now tell you all she's done for me!!

(31)

May 27, 1878.

. . . At last I am up and able to write to you with my own hand, but just fancy, with pauses about every three minutes, as writing brings on the attacks more than anything almost. . . . I have at last seen the absolute necessity of acquiescing in the matter of my *modus vivendi* during the holidays and have signed a paper of rules the doctor prescribes for me. Imagine — no lawn tennis, no riding, no dancing, nothing!! This to me, who have all this year been looking forward to plunging with renewed vigour into the old life for a

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little bit, and have been glorying in the feeling that I could face the holly hedge on the green, or an adversary at lawn tennis without fear — that after I had been a week in home air the old Adam would be fully re-established in me! Still it is true that is nothing against a life-time — and I know it must be! . . .

I am much disgusted that I shall have to hurry over an important matter, i.e., choosing the souvenirs of Leipzig for the folks at home. I meant to have spent a whole month in looking about, and now probably the matter must be got over in a day or two. Such is life. Also I meant to have spent the fortnight previous to my departure in practising up various of my perfectly unplayable compositions to (I hope!) delight the maternal ear. Instead of which I am not allowed to touch a piano, and as I can't help it when it stands there, the Doctor says better send it away!! So, Mother darling, you must put up with them as they are — in rough — and when you hear them listen to the composition, not the performance of the same! I can't realise that I shall see you all again so soon. It is almost too good to be true, that is to say if it comes off. Fancy if Mary is still there, which I hope she will be! . . .

(32)

Friday Night, June 7, 1878.

. . . I will send on your note to Frau v. H., who is far away in Bohemia and will be so glad to have it. She was always saying — specially while cooking something for me — “What fun it would be if your Mother were to walk in suddenly, except that I fear I should not be here in her place then!” which she certainly would not have been.

. . . Oh! Mother I hope the rules may be a little relaxed. But the worst of it is I have promised my dear German Doctor on my word of honour, signed a paper to that effect which I must show you when I get home, and unless he absolves me I fear I can't relax! But we will see and I will hope on. Otherwise I often suddenly burst out into vehement howling at the bare idea of it, as I know my year's devotion to the Muses has not affected my love for field sports, to which I know I have just as much natural bent as to music. I'll jump over the lawn tennis net for Captain S—'s benefit once more before I leave home again!

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. . . Do tell Miss Sitte that when I am in England I shall be so glad to have her to remind me of dear, dear Germany, and I hope she will let me talk German with her sometimes, that I may not quite forget it when there, though I know what a trial it is to have foreigners talking one's own language with one, when one is perfect mistress of the language of the country one is in. Though not perfect mistress of German by any means I can of course talk it as fast as I like, and nothing annoys me so intensely as when people insist upon talking bad English with me in Germany. Still perhaps Frä. Sitte will talk German with me out of good-nature.

[B.]

From Elisabeth von Herzogenberg ("Lisl")

[NOTE. — *These early letters of Lisl's are given mainly to show the key in which our friendship started; what I may call the real letters, written when we came to know each other thoroughly, will be found later. As she often lapses into English I put "in English" when I am transcribing, and "in German" when translating. She once said she knew her English style was a blend of baby-language and Dr. Johnson, and often she uses it with comic intention; at other times the comic effect is involuntary.*]

(1)

Schloss Wernsdorf, Bohemia: May 27, 1878.

(*In German*) My dear, dear Ethel, — I hope you have got my two greetings, one written in Leipzig, another from Aussee, so that you hadn't to wait as long as you expected for a line from me. I cannot forgive myself for causing you so much agitation the last day; any good I may have done seems to me nullified by this last action! But I know you won't agree, and that your loving heart magnifies what I did for you and underestimates the delight it was to me doing it. Surely one would have no heart in one's bosom were it not among the intensest of pleasures to be able to help someone dear to you; to begin with, how soothing to one's vanity to find oneself so important, so longed for! . . .

Ethel, I won't make myself out worse than I am, but really the last fourteen days were such a delight, gave me so much pleasure, that I often felt quite dishonourable in calmly pocketing, as if I de-

Impressions that Remained

served them, the thanks that poured so generously from your mouth. Don't go on thanking me but let us both thank Fate that meant so well by us on that memorable birthday of Dr. Paul's! I confess I do not look upon it as a misfortune that you became so ill, that is to say that you had this acute attack; firstly because I don't think you would otherwise have been as careful as you will be now, secondly because I doubt if we should ever have got where we are now but for those fourteen days.

(*In English*) After to-morrow I hope to receive the first bulletin, and perhaps — more and dearer to me — the first lines from your own little hand. My darling, did the horrid men come already to take away the piano? and are you growing daily pale and paler from obligatory *Askese*?¹⁴ And do you very much long after all you have not, poor little ill-treated, though tenderly loved child? And what does Dr. Langbein say about the term of your departure, and will Miss Nancy be sure to wait till you can start safely without an etiquette sticking on your back bearing the word "fragile"? Write to me soon, dearest!

I am not quite here yet. I never feel comfortable at first; I can't get accustomed to Heinrich's sister — so unlike to him, the Graces not having attended her cradle; without the touch of tenderness without which it is so difficult to me to think of a woman. Good, courageous, upright, and all that, but very matter of fact. I like the children and the 170 sheep here best, also a large good Newfoundland dog with quite a way to remind one of some of Longfellow's nice little poems — Open Window and that sort. He has such a wonderful condescending way of looking on the children when they play with him. Of course he feels his superiority. They have a bird here in a cage hanging in a tree in the garden — think what a cruelty! — that reminds me of a certain poor little Euphorion¹⁵ when in a short time it will be at home, looking on with folded arms when the others play lawn tennis! I really do feel how cruel we are, Langbein and I, and yet how necessary our cruelty is.

Good-bye and my blessing to you, my darling. I won't write again till I have a letter from you. My love to Miss Nancy; it is

¹⁴ Self-denial.

¹⁵ Child of Faust and Helen of Troy (in Part II of Goethe's *Faust*), who came to grief through wilfulness and daring: a nickname of Lisl's for myself.

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such a comfort to me to know you are to journey together. Tell her how I confide in her. Take care of my little Ethel for the sake of your mother.

LISL.

P.S. — I don't want B— to know yet that we call each other "du"; yet how should she unless you leave letters about? And I even ask myself if it is not a pity for others to know, and perhaps make inward remarks or smile — oh! or to ask if one . . . but in fact what do I care? I have forgotten how to call Ethel "Sie" — !

(2)

May 29, 1878.

(*In English*) Here is my song. Now don't be thinking I do not know that the doubled leading-note on the second page, first bar ("fällt, ihr *dürren* Blätter") is, in fact, false and nasty, and an unclean matter altogether unworthy the wife of Aloysius;¹⁶ but in spite of that I can't help finding it expressive, and that it gives the touch of a certain harshness that I want there; for which reason Aloysius has graciously permitted it as what the Catholics call a "lässige Sündell!"¹⁷ Poor little song it appears to me, when I see it black on white, so poor and meagre and childish! and still I have a kind of tenderness for it; also because I played it to my husband long before he was my husband, in March '67, when I saw him for the last time before *the* time from which I began a new reckoning. And he wanted a copy of it, which of course I never gave him, laced up in the Spanish boots of conventional holding-back as poor Lisl was at that time! There my darling — deal kindly with it — this is all I can do for my child to-day. Henry sends you his love, a special message. He likes you *very* much. . . . My Aunt Wüllerstorf is a dear aunt but oh! such an exciteable one. How can people be so uncalm? . . . But I love her dearly. . . .

(3)

May 31, 1878.

(*In German*) . . . I must just tell you an absurd dream I had, which however will show you where my thoughts are at night. I was

¹⁶ A nickname she gave her husband.

¹⁷ Venial sin.

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spending the evening with the Röntgens, but Johanna was not there, and I said to myself: "Of course she's looking after Ethel." We were to make music and I was to play 2nd violin in a Beethoven quartet (to which apparently I was quite accustomed) but they gave me a shockingly written MS. part — all wrong too — so that presently Papa Röntgen lost patience and stopped. I apologized profusely but said the part was really disgraceful, and also nearly illegible, owing to the masses of blotting-sand on it which made it look like a cutlet fried in bread-crumbs. (Observe this dreadful interruption of cooking into music — picture of my unfortunate Sphinx-nature!) Thereupon Johanna came in and I rushed at her and asked after Ethel. "Ethel is not at all well and must probably stay in bed tomorrow too." And I: "How is that? What have you been up to?" Then Johanna drew forth a long list with all her crimes written on it, and confessed that the worst one was meeting Aunt Wüllerstorf in the street and taking her to see Ethel. "What!" I cried out, "that excitable aunt? that aunt who never, never is allowed to go near a sick person? I must go to Ethel at once" — and I rushed away in terrible agitation, and woke up still quite upset by the dream. Dear good Johanna must not be angry with me! it is all because she was so remorseful one day for having gone to see you in the Salomonstrasse at a time when visitors were forbidden! . . .

(4)

June 2, 1878.

(*In German*) . . . Don't write long letters; it's bad for you and I can't write at length myself here. The minuet form is best suited to us just now — 1st Part: 16 bars; 2nd Part: 16 bars; a little Trio; repeat the Minuet and add a nice little Coda for the special edification of

YOUR MOTHER.

(5)

June 9, 1878.

(*In German*) . . . Don't feel like that about returning to England. In a way I myself feel as if we were "drifting farther and farther from each other," but that cannot change the fact that we love each other, that I "had you" when I was eleven, and shall have

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you till I'm eighty — and that's such a good feeling! . . . My child, I wonder sometimes at the different ways Fate spins the thread which binds people together — how it often takes years to enter into possession, and how in our case something has grown between us that tells me we belong together, inseparably! . . . To think how I hung back at first! I didn't know you and am in principle against new friendships; then too there was a feeling of unfaithfulness towards other people whom I knew better than you. I thought I was merely attracted by little ways that appealed to me, and said to myself: "You must look closely and weigh well." . . . And now, there you are, little tree, grown into my heart with such deep roots that nothing can ever tear them out! And I gladly own to myself that things are thus, because I have studied you so closely and believe I know you so thoroughly! . . . (*In English*) Yes, I have been photographed by the best man in Vienna, and I think in all four positions I'll have a big nose, for the atelier was hot which always produces big noses. But you should not be photographed again. I will not have you become a waister — or do you say spendthrift? (have I hit the word now?) and would hold you a sermon but that I feel very weak and touched and melting away like butter in the sun. I am frightened of the temptations at your home — no riding, no tennis, a Pilgrim's Progress indeed — and anxious to hear how you pass through the tests, poor little Pamina, quite alone without a Tamino to help you — only the Magic Flute of your affection for me, and Music, that dear consoler, as sole support! I don't like your beginning by those races! Of course your fanatic passion for horses must have the effect to excite you when you look on at such racings, that in themselves are so exciting; and really it isn't necessary, now is it? You can show off your new little hat (for two pounds) when you make your calls of arrival (? *Antritts-Visiten* I mean). Darling don't be angry, I know you don't care about all that stuff, and prefer sitting at home, since you cannot play tennis, at your writing table and your piano, but the kind mother will of course try to make show of her daughter, and in this respect you will, I believe, have the hardest battles to fight. . . .

CHAPTER XXII. *Summer* 1878

THE JOURNEY to England via Rotterdam and Harwich, punctuated by postcards and telegrams to and from Lisl at every available stage, is chiefly memorable as the most appalling of all my many Channel crossings. Nancy and I shared a cabin, and her sufferings were terrific; but just when I was beginning to reflect with alarm that people have been known to die under these circumstances, a calm voice below me remarked: "I think the horrors of seasickness are much exaggerated." My father met us at Harwich, and we started for our respective homes by a line built apparently on the switch-back principle — my first experience of this detestable effect of a rough sea voyage.

What a wonderful return home it was! Invalid and incipient "Phoenix," as Mother persisted in calling me sometimes, I was spoiled to my heart's content, the children, whom I called my white slaves, fetching and carrying for me, and even lacing up my boots. The glamour of home, which even at Leipzig had never paled, seemed positively dazzling; how well I remember the flavour of it all — the incredible youth and jollity of the young ones, the lovingness of Mother, the beloved dogs and horses! I had not expected much cordiality from my father towards an unrepentant and apparently justified rebel, but the fact that my allowance had not been exceeded by one penny, together with the less important one of countless testimonials to my seriousness of purpose, went a long way, and I found the life I had chosen was an accepted fact.

But presently, when the novelty wore off, I began to review the situation with dismay. My Leipzig doctor had drawn up a document which might have been headed by the word dear among all others to the German heart, "*Verboten*," for it was a list of forbidden joys that included, with the exception of work (which was permitted in moderation), all the things I loved best, namely tennis, riding, and dancing. I had shed what seemed to Lisl inconceivably childish tears over this document, but solemnly signed it, as did she and Dr. Langbein. Hardly had I been ten days at home, however, when all the worst symptoms disappeared by magic, and

I began to kick against the pricks. The matter was complicated by a rather comic infusion of jealousy. No one ever rejoiced at heart more unselfishly than my mother at any kindness shown to her children, and for Lisl's love and care of me (as previously for Frau Doctor's) she was deeply and touchingly grateful. Nevertheless when it came to my life at home being regulated by far-off strangers, when her wondering ears heard me refusing even to handle a racquet for fear of temptation, although it was plain to sensible English judgment that there was no longer any reason why I should not play, this was more than her philosophy could bear; and I cannot help thinking that when she suggested I should see Sir William Jenner and be formally released from my promises, her motives may have been more complex than appeared.

There was a very funny incident a week or two later, when, just to see if my eye was still in, and standing firmly rooted to one spot, I made my sisters serve to me, my mother, unknown to us, watching the proceedings from her bedroom window. At luncheon she remarked with obvious satisfaction: "I see you *have* begun tennis again in spite of Frau von Herzogenberg," whereupon I angrily declared it was not so, and that taking a serve or two was not playing tennis — to which she rejoined that it seemed to her uncommonly like it. In short there was such a scene that, much to my surprise, Papa suddenly broke in with: "You don't understand the game; she says she was not playing and there's an end of it." And as usual when he intervened she gave in at once. Eventually, in spite of impassioned remonstrance from Lisl, including the quotation of many a slighting remark I had rashly made at Leipzig about English doctors, all embargoes were removed, and the day came when I joyfully informed her, whom the news left more than indifferent, that my game was as good as ever, in fact better.

To the end I never succeeded in making her grasp what games and sport mean to people of our race; that side of life seemed to her trivial, or at least unworthy the passionate interest of a budding artist. When I had told her in my sick-room that the family were requested never to mention hunting in their letters, because the very word drove me wild with longing, I remember her amazed look as she said: "My dear child, you must surely be mad!" And

though she eventually learned to accept these aberrations with philosophy, they belonged in the large category of "things in you I shall never understand."

That summer a ridiculous sequel to one of my Leipzig adventures took place. When I had parted some months before on terms of grateful but strictly platonic affection from the kind young man who had conducted the sale of "grandeurs" in the famous libel case, we had settled that he should come and see me in my own home, which he did. But what was my astonishment when, in the course of a ride together, it became clear that he had construed this invitation into an encouragement to persevere in his suit! I don't think I have ever been more angry; from the first I had seen he was in earnest, and whoever I had flirted with it certainly was not with him; consequently my diatribes concerning male fatuousness and vanity — none the less stunning for being delivered over my shoulder at full gallop — seemed to me amply justified. He was deeply hurt, and we parted with stiffness on both sides.

I did a certain amount of what I regret to say was referred to in letters to Lisl as "that horrid counterpoint," and knew she was similarly employed. But under what ideal circumstances! Enscathed peacefully in a mountain district, with her Aloysius, as we called him, at her elbow (Aloysius being a Jesuit noble of the Middle Ages who forsook the world for higher things and was eventually canonized), naturally she made rapid progress; whereas the exercises I sent from time to time, including those on the bird-call I quoted, were far from satisfactory and few in number, the blame of course being laid by both of them on balls, tennis, and general frivolity. One letter of remonstrance apparently made me "howl," and altogether caused such despair that Aloysius himself felt moved to write and administer consolation. But our whole early correspondence testifies to the grave, beneficent influence exercised by Lisl.¹

On one thing I had set my heart, to give my mother one great musical pleasure, and eventually decided on a home production of the *Liebeslieder Walzer*. I beat up in the neighbourhood and at Aldershot four people with ears, voices, and feelings into whom it

¹ Appendix III, pp. 269 *et seq.*, Nos. 2, 7, 12 *et seq.*

was possible to drum the vocal parts, and a really musical Russian woman to help in the piano-duet accompaniment. It was like teaching parrots, but the result was an excellent performance — in Mrs. Longman's opinion as good as anything you could hear in London, and it may be remembered that she was considered an authority. Later on I went to stay with Alice and Mary, and actually pulled off the same feat in Edinburgh with new performers and equal success.

Lisl, who was seeing a good deal of Brahms just then, told him all about this propaganda work of mine and all about me, which of course filled me with mingled terror and delight. She informed me too that he was in his best mood — “treats me so kindly, as a dear, big Newfoundland dog treats a little King Charles,” and since I may have uncomplimentary things to say about Brahms by and by, it will be a pleasure to quote later on some very warm tributes she pays him, to which I heartily subscribe.² She generally used English in the lighter parts of her letters, German in the others, and aware of my own recklessness as to leaving correspondence about, as also of my mother's jealousy, I had begged her to “tell me” in English and “speak to me” in German. I even went farther. By way of discouraging requests to let Mother see one of my friend's letters I once threw a wholly German one on to her lap, saying: “Do read this, it's so amusing.” As I expected, the calligraphy defeated her, and I was asked to read it aloud instead, which I did — with omissions.

Meanwhile, as the summer went on, the old feeling of the staleness and pointlessness of home life came back, and with it a furious longing for Leipzig and my new friends, to cheat which I warmed up a few former enthusiasms . . . (Lisl's first intimation of what was to be a perennial subject of dispute between us, my insatiable appetite for humanity). About this time, too, the aftermath of enlarging Frimhurst was beginning to be reaped. My father announced that we had for some time been exceeding our income, but it seemed impossible to work up zeal for a whole-hearted scheme of retrenchment. This theme was the source of constant and fruitless sparring, and of course the old friction between me

² Appendix, p. 273.

and my mother began again, with the very natural element of soreness as to foreign influence thrown in.

Again, though I was no longer exactly a black sheep in my father's eyes, he seemed to me wilfully antagonistic, and I wrote miserably to Lisl that I was becoming wicked at home — hard and rebellious; that I never should learn self-control and that there was “a perfect devil in my heart that sleeps only at Leipzig.” In fact I could hardly await the end of the holidays, particularly as I had finished a bit of work that I felt certain would please Aloysius better than my counterpoint, namely *Variations on an Original Theme*, one of the variations being inspired by, and named after, the filly I had broken. Mercifully, as in the old days, the friction between my mother and me was presently forgotten in her perfect appreciation of this early effort and my consequent delight in the depth of her musical instinct. I remember flinging my arms round her and saying: “You are more musical than all my friends put together,” which in a sense was perfectly true. Thus, at the end of September, in a glow of restored affection and harmony, I left for Germany, this time being allowed without remonstrance to travel under my own wing.



CHAPTER XXIII. *Autumn and Winter* 1878

DURING the previous winter I had met one of Brahms's oldest friends, a deeply musical and most unprofessorial Saxon named Engelmann, who nevertheless held a professorship at the University of Utrecht, and whose wife, originally a professional pianiste, was said to be one of the finest artists alive. Both of them were old friends, too, of the Herzogenbergs, and as he had suggested my coming to see them on my way back to Leipzig I did so, and spent an enchanting week, sight-seeing and music-making.

Off the music stool my hostess was a pleasant, childlike, not very interesting little person, who seemed to spend most of her time laughing at nothing in particular; at the piano the whole woman

changed, and you were in presence of a grave, inspired, passion-wrought pythoness. Her husband was an admirable cellist, and in that house I heard, among other things, the Brahms piano quartets, the Quintet, and the Horn Trio as I shall never hear them again. We were quite among ourselves, except for Julius Röntgen, who came from Amsterdam to see me, and incidentally played viola. In a couple of days Frau Engelmann knew my *Variations* by heart, and I learned what one's compositions can become in the hands of a great artist.

This was my first visit to Holland; I was shown many beautiful things, among them the desolate Dead Towns on the Zuider Zee, where strange, unfriendly fishermen in fantastic costumes, with long, straight, coal-black locks hanging into their eyes, squat all day in the streets, glaring hatred at intrusive strangers. I remember too how we scorned a very smart Amsterdam bankeress, who strutted about the deck of the steamer in brown boots, the first any of us had seen. We thought them ridiculous and unpleasantly *auffallend*,¹ and so apparently did the other people on the boat.

Two days later I was back in Leipzig. Driving straight to the Humboldtstrasse, where the Herzogenbergs lived, I appeared unexpectedly in their flat just as they had sat down to breakfast, and noticed that Lisl turned ashen — the effect, as I then learned, of any surprise, whether pleasant or the reverse. I remember that the spectre of her dread infirmity rose before me for a moment, to vanish in the three-part counterpoint of our Wiedersehen. They overwhelmed me with congratulations on my stalwart, healthful, sun-browned appearance, for of course they had never seen me in my normal country-life condition and found me almost unrecognizable. My toilette had been performed in the train, my luggage left at the station, and under my arm was a parcel, the contents of which would, I hoped, banish all recollection of contrapuntal failures. And so it turned out; the *Variations* pleased them as much as they had the Engelmanns, and far from being taken tragically, as I had half expected, the "Filly" variation was considered one of the best of the bunch. Then a new Brahms motet, of which she had spoken in a letter,² was played to me, followed by some new work of Heinrich's,

¹ Conspicuous.

² See p. 273.

till, about half an hour before the midday meal, Lisl disappeared to see to something in the kitchen, while he examined and discussed the *Variations* in detail. And when, after one of the admirably cooked meals which were the secret pride of that little household, we arrived at the sweet stage, what did I see but the *Süsse Speise* I love best in the world, the dish which to this day I cannot perceive advancing in my direction or mentioned on a menu without emotion . . . meringues — called at Frimhurst and throughout English kitchens “marrangs”! I had once written from home that whatever the differences between my mother and myself, we were of one mind on that subject, and Lisl had determined to show me what the hands that had just been delicately disentangling and recombining the ingredients of a motet in I forget how many parts could do with eggs and sugar — for the meringues were her handiwork, cases and all. Not too sweet, not too sticky (which however is better than too powdery), the cream neither over-solid nor yet whipped into fluff — in a word, and without hyperbole, masterpieces! . . .

After dinner, for Germans dined then at midday, I collected my luggage, and Lisl and I drove off to the Salomonstrasse. The old house was transmogrified; the stairs had been mended, the walls repapered, and the whole place looked fresher and cleaner than one would have believed possible. The windows of my new rooms faced south-west, looking over fruit-trees and acacias, and I suppose never was young musician more ideally and cheaply lodged. By the next day I had rigged up a grand trophy, consisting of racquets, skates, fox-brushes, a hunting-crop, and my long boot-hooks, which roused the admiration of my landlady’s children — a well-brought-up set of youngsters this time, who all started a discreet *Schwärmerei* for me. Frau Merseburger, their mother, was a jolly, buxom, pleasant-faced woman, of about thirty-five, with a dried-up, immensely polite little husband anywhere between fifty-five and seventy. He was a publisher and bookseller on a very small scale; the strong line of the firm was school books, and gaudily got-up little volumes of very minor lyrics which reminded me of my great-uncle the Professor’s effusions. He gave me one or two of these in case I should feel tempted to set extracts to music, and I then wondered, as always, how stuff on that level manages to get into print at all. The only

other lodger was a big, shy man of about forty with a huge fair beard and spectacles. He had a room on the ground-floor, mine being on the second, and contrived by deft dartings in and out of the house, and cautious tactics in passages, to be as good as invisible. I noticed that Frau Merseburger was rather embarrassed and apologetic about this lodger, why I could not imagine, but as she married him when old Merseburger died a few years later, I have since hazarded a guess.

As I said, I supped in my own room, but on a few grand occasions, Herr Merseburger's birthday and so on, I was invited down below, the other lodger occasionally being present too. Once we were favoured with the company of a nephew of my landlord's, stoker or something of the sort on an ocean tramp, who was reported to have cruised a good deal in Chinese waters, on the strength of which he gave us an exhibition of Chinese singing and dancing — a very odd performance that worked his uncle up into a frenzy of senile delight. After a glass or two of sweet champagne on the top of beer and Rhine wine, the old gentleman used invariably to do two things — first quote Goethe, and then, a little later on, begin pinching his wife. She would laugh, get very red, and say: "*Aber Männchen! . . . benimm dich doch!*" ("but, little husband! . . . behave thyself"); meanwhile the lodger sat unmoved, and Frau Merseburger's deprecating glances and giggles were addressed not to him but to me. It was a very harmless display, but next morning there would be a touch of apology in the old man's polite hopes that the feast had agreed with me (for this is the form such compliments take in Germany) and I imagined a curtain lecture had been administered. Such was the family on whom the comfort of my daily life depended, and who, I may add, took any amount of trouble to ensure it. Not only for this reason, but for others which can be imagined after reading the above, I never think of the Merseburgers without a little gush of friendliness and amusement.

From now onwards I became, and remained for seven years, a semi-detached member of the Herzogenberg family; wherever they were bidden I was bidden too; not a day passed but that one or other of my meals was taken with them; and though like horses I have always preferred getting back for the night to my own stable,

the little spare room, stocked for my needs, was always ready when required. And after I was in bed Lisl would come in, comb and brush in hand, her hair streaming over a white dressing-gown — “all in white and gold” as I put it in my youthful enthusiasm — to make sure I had everything I needed. Daily I became more conscious of the fineness and strength of her personality — qualities which those who care to read such letters of hers as I give will, I think, feel, notwithstanding the inadequacies of translation.

But on one point I want to lay special stress, because in the years to come, when it militated so terribly against me, I tried to remember it had once been my chief delight; I mean a certain strong simplicity of soul that reminded me of the Elgin marbles, something at once womanly and incorruptible that suggested possible limitations but had a subtle majesty of which not even the greatest degree of intimacy dulled my perception. Witchery, an un-Greek element perhaps, was supposed to be her chief characteristic, and certainly her dear lovely person carried out that idea more than the other. Nevertheless had the Venus of Milo been a mortal, I think the large, quiet motions of her spirit would have been like Lisl’s, except for two traits that may have been lacking in the goddess: a curious most touching humility, lurking, unnoticed by most people, at the bottom of her soul, and a lovingness that had the sweetness of ripe, perfect fruit, and which no one but her husband and I knew in its fullness. When I add that Herzogenberg was on far too big lines to begrudge her a semblance of what nature had withheld — or me the blessing of her tender mothering love — it will be allowed that the foundation of our friendship seemed well and truly laid.

In musical matters Lisl and I saw absolutely eye to eye, and it was a strange intoxicating thing to realize that in moments of musical ecstasy the heart of the being on earth you loved best was so absolutely at one with yours that it might have been the same heart. I think I was always more critical than either of them as regards weak spots in Brahms, or even the older classics, and was never able, as they were, to admire every single page Bach ever wrote; but on the summits we met. No doubt, too, the catholicity of taste I acquired in after life would have shocked them, but that day had not yet dawned. Meanwhile Lisl and I plodded away at our counterpoint in friendly rivalry, and used sometimes to wonder whether Brahms,

given a *cantus firmus* to work in four parts, would turn out anything so very much better than our productions. Herzogenberg was a splendid teacher, but though my industry and zeal left nothing to be desired, quite the reverse, he told me I wasn't really a good pupil — which I suppose any master would say of a beginner who always claims to know best!

I won't speak of a very thrilling unforgettable event, Frau Schumann's Jubilee, which took place that winter, nor of my riding adventures, including the most fantastic hunt I ever took part in, because these events are described elsewhere.³ Of course I spent Christmas with the Herzogenbergs, and the table round my little tree was paved with miniature scores of Beethoven quartets. By and by, borne along by Papa Röntgen's teaching enthusiasm, and despite hands ill adapted to the instrument, I began learning the violin, and eventually became equal to taking second violin in easy quartets. The lessons were arranged to include the excellent sit-down Röntgen tea — blessed cry of his Dutch blood — and after tea he taught me chess. I got so passionately attached to the game, though a very poor player, that eventually it had to be given up, otherwise I should have spent my life doing nothing else.



CHAPTER XXIV. *Brahms*

EARLY in 1879, I think some time in January, Brahms came to Leipzig to conduct his Violin Concerto — played of course by Joachim, who had just been introducing it at Amsterdam, and was much upset at having to tune down his ears again to normal pitch, after having learned, as he said, to play it apparently in F# major in Holland — a hard feat! I understood then why pitch always has a tendency to rise, for, wedded as Joachim was to orthodoxy in all things, I nevertheless caught a few remarks about “increased bril-

³ Appendix III, p. 286, Nos. 1 and 2; p. 288, No. 3.

liancy," and so on. That Concerto, which has never been among my favourite Brahms works, may for aught I know be child's play to students nowadays; at that time however the technique was unfamiliar and not considered favourable to the instrument. Wags called it "Concerto *against* (instead of *for*) the Violin." But I fancy my musical sensibility was blurred in the wild excitement of at last getting to know the great man himself. During the following years I saw a good deal of him, on and off, and here follows the summing-up of my impressions for what they are worth.

Some people, I believe, have youthful enthusiasms, even in their own branch of art, that wane as years go on, but I can remember no musical recantations. A favourable judgment seems to me to imply a satisfied need; you may have many needs, but why should one interfere with the other? Why, when you come to know and admire, say, Anatole France, should you delight less in someone at the opposite pole, for instance Dickens? From the very first I had worshipped Brahms's music, as I do some of it now; hence was pre-disposed to admire the man. But without exactly disliking him, his personality neither impressed nor attracted me, and I never could understand why the faithful had such an exalted opinion of his intellect. He was rather taciturn and jerky as a rule, and notoriously difficult to carry on a conversation with, but after meals his mind and tongue unstiffened; and then, under the stimulus of countless cups of very strong black coffee, he was ready to discuss literature, art, politics, morals, or anything under the sun. On such occasions, though he never said anything stupid, I cannot recall hearing him say anything very striking, and when his latest pronouncement on Bismarck, poetry, or even music was ecstatically handed round, it generally seemed to me what anyone might have said.

Once only do I remember his taking an exceptional line. A portrait of the old Kaiser by Lenbach, recently exhibited at the Museum, had aroused such a storm of indignation that it was withdrawn, and I believe ended by being *verboten* as far as public galleries were concerned. The reason was that whereas all other portraits of Wilhelm I represented a martial-looking veteran of about sixty, of whom the press stated that he swung himself on to his horse without the aid of a mounting-block, Lenbach had painted a very tired old man of eighty-four, with pale, flabby cheeks, and sunken, lack-lustre

eyes — in short, the fine old wreck he was, of whom it was whispered that, as a matter of fact, he had to be lifted on to his horse in the recesses of the stable yard in order to make his daily appearance in the Thiergarten. The picture was infinitely pathetic and even beautiful; so, it seemed to me, was the idea of the old warrior determined to sally forth as long as he could sit on a horse's back, no matter how he got there. But the people who manufacture public opinion in Germany saw in this record of human decay something detrimental to monarchical prestige, some going so far as to declare the picture should be publicly destroyed and the painter arraigned for *lèse-majesté* — in short, the incident opened one's eyes to the gulf that lies between German and Anglo-Saxon mentality. There was a minority of another way of thinking, but these kept pretty quiet, and I was delighted to find that Brahms, who always had the courage of his opinions and truckled to no one, thought the whole outcry preposterous, and said so.

I think what chiefly angered me was his views on women, which after all were the views prevalent in Germany, only I had not realized the fact, having imagined *mein Mann sagt* was a local peculiarity. Relics of this form of barbarism still linger in England, but as voiced by a people gone mad on logic, worshippers of brute force, who visualize certain facts with the hard stare of eyes devoid of eyelashes, these theories would, I fancy, repel even our own reactionaries. George III, himself a German, might have subscribed a hundred and fifty years ago to William II's famous axiom about women being out of place anywhere except in the kitchen, nursery, and church, but you often heard it quoted with complete assent by German women themselves in my day.

Brahms, as artist and bachelor, was free to adopt what may be called the poetical variant of the *Kinder, Kirche, Küche* axiom, namely that women are playthings. He made one or two exceptions, as such men will, and chief among these was Lisl, to whom his attitude was perfect — reverential, admiring, and affectionate, without a tinge of amorousness. Being, like most artists, greedy, it specially melted him that she was such a splendid *Hausfrau*; indeed as often as not, from love of the best, she would do her own marketing. During Brahms's visits she was never happier than when concocting some exquisite dish to set before the king; like a glorified

Frau Röntgen she would come in, flushed with stooping over the range, her golden hair wavier than ever from the heat, and cry: "Begin that movement again; that much you owe me!" and Brahms's worship would flame up in unison with the blaze in the kitchen. In short he was adorable with Lisl.

In his relations with her husband, who completely effaced himself as musician in the master's presence, he took pains to be appreciative, but could not disguise the fact that Herzogenberg's compositions did not greatly interest him. Once when he had been in a bad temper and rather cruel about them, Lisl rated him and wept, and Brahms kissed her hand and nearly wept too, and it appears there was a most touching scene; but the thing rankled in her bosom for a long time.

To see him with Lili Wach, Frau Schumann and her daughters, or other links with his great predecessors was to see him at his best, so gentle and respectful was his bearing; in fact to Frau Schumann he behaved as might a particularly delightful old-world son. I remember a most funny conversation between them as to why the theme of his D Major Piano Variations had what she called "an unnecessary bar tacked on," this being one of the supreme touches in that wonderful, soaring tune. She argued the point lovingly, but as ever with some heat, and I thought him divinely patient.

His ways with other women-folk — or, to use the detestable word for ever on his lips, *Weibsbilder* — were less admirable. If they did not appeal to him he was incredibly awkward and ungracious; if they were pretty he had an unpleasant way of leaning back in his chair, pouting out his lips, stroking his moustache, and staring at them as a greedy boy stares at jam-tartlets. People used to think this rather delightful, specially hailing it, too, as a sign that the great man was in high good humour, but it angered me, as did also his jokes about women, and his everlasting gibes at any, excepting Lisl of course, who possessed brains or indeed ideas of any kind. I used to complain fiercely to her about this, but her secret feeling was, I expect, that of many anti-suffragist women I have known, who, for some reason or other on the pinnacle of man's favour themselves, had no objection to the rest of womenkind being held in contempt — the attitude of Fatima the Pride of the Harem. To be fair to Lisl, I never heard her express definite sentiments on the subject, about

which I had never thought myself, but as she was of her epoch and intensely German, her instinct was probably that of Fatima.

A delightful trait in Brahms was his horror of being lionized. He had a strong prejudice against England, which he would jocularly insist on for my benefit, but what chiefly prevented his going there was dread of our hero-worshipping faculties: "I know how you went on with Mendelssohn," he said. What with their own embarrassment and his total lack of ease — or, as the Italians put it, lack of education — ordinary mortals who humbly tried to convey to him their admiration for his music had rather a bad time. The only person who sailed gaily through such troubled waters was Consul Limburger, but this again did not please Brahms and outraged the elect. After some performance Limburger once remarked in his airy way: "Really, Herr Doctor, I don't know where you mean to take us in the slow movement, whether to Heaven or Hell!" and Brahms replied with a mock bow: "Whichever you please, Herr Consul," which was quoted as a brilliant piece of repartee that ought to have crushed the audacious Limburger. But one retort of his was really rather good. The first subject in one of his chamber works is almost identical with a theme of Mendelssohn's, and when some would-be connoisseur eagerly pointed out the fact, Brahms remarked: "*Ganz richtig — und jeder Schafskopf merkt's leider sofort!*" ("Quite so — and the worst of it is every blockhead notices it directly.")

I am bound to say his taste in jokes sometimes left much to be desired, and can give an instance on the subject of my own name, which all foreigners find difficult, and which, as I innocently told him, my washerwoman pronounced "Schmeiss." Now, the verb *schmeissen*, "to throw violently," is vulgar but quite harmless; there is however an antique noun, *Schmeiss*, which means something unmentionable, and a certain horrible fly which frequents horrible places is called *Schmeiss-Fliege*. As Brahms was for ever commenting on the extreme rapidity of my movements, he found the play upon words irresistible and nicknamed me "*die Schmeiss-Fliege*," but Lisl was so scandalized at this joke that he had to drop it.

Among his admirers it was the fashion to despise Wagner, but to this he demurred, and a remark he often made: "His imitators are monkeys (*Affen*) but the man himself has something to say," was

cited as proof of his noble, generous disposition. People like Joachim and Herzogenberg considered Wagner a colossal joke, and I remember their relating how as a sort of penance they sat through a whole act of *Siegfried*, keeping up each other's spirits by exchanging a "Good morning" whenever a certain chord, let us say a diminished ninth, occurred in the score — a very provoking pleasantry even to hear about.

I like best to think of Brahms at the piano, playing his own compositions or Bach's mighty organ fugues, sometimes accompanying himself with a sort of muffled roar, as of Titans stirred to sympathy in the bowels of the earth. The veins in his forehead stood out, his wonderful bright blue eyes became veiled, and he seemed the incarnation of the restrained power in which his own work is forged. For his playing was never noisy, and when lifting a submerged theme out of a tangle of music he used jokingly to ask us to admire the gentle sonority of his "tenor thumb."

One of his finest characteristics was his attitude towards the great dead in his own art. He knew his own worth — what great creator does not? — but in his heart he was one of the most profoundly modest men I ever met, and to hear himself classed with such as Beethoven and Bach, to hear his C Minor Symphony called "The Tenth Symphony,"¹ jarred and outraged him. Once, when he turned up to rehearse some work of his, Reinecke had not yet finished rehearsing one of Mozart's symphonies — I forget which — and after the slow movement he murmured something to Lisl that I did not catch. She afterwards told me he had said: "I'd give all my stuff (*Kram*) to have written that one Andante!"

Among desultory remarks of his which remained in my mind, I remember his saying that he had given up predicting what a young composer's development would be, having so often found that those he thought talented came to nothing and *vice versa*; and in this connection he pointed out that all the work of Gluck's that still lives was written after he was fifty. I have never looked up Gluck in a lexicon to see if this opinion would still hold good.

To me personally he was very kind and fatherly in his awkward way, chiefly, no doubt, because of the place I held in his friend's

¹ The implication was that it equalled, or surpassed, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

heart; but after a very slight acquaintance I guessed he would never take a woman writer seriously, and had no desire, though kindly urged by him to do so, to show him my work. At last one day, without asking my leave, Lisl showed him a little fugue of mine, and when I came in and found them looking at it he began analysing it, simply, gravely, and appreciatively, saying this development was good, that modulation curious, and so on. Carried away by surprise and delight, I lost my head, and pointing out a constructive detail that had greatly fussed Herzogenberg — the sort of thing that made him call me a bad pupil — asked eagerly: "Don't you think if I feel it that way I have a right to end on the dominant?" Suddenly the scene changed, back came the ironic smile, and stroking his moustache he said in a voice charged with kindly contempt: "I am quite sure, dear child, you may end when and where you please!" There it was! he had suddenly remembered I was a girl, to take whom seriously was beneath a man's dignity, and the quality of the work, which had I been an obscure male he would have upheld against anyone, simply passed from his mind.

Now let us suppose a publisher had been present — and they swarmed at the Herzogenbergs' — what would have been the effect of this little scene on a budding inclination to print for me later on? And does the public realize that unless it is published, music cannot possibly get known?

I have no intention of alluding to my own work in these memoirs, unless to make passing mention of such early performances as happen to come within its scope; but there is one incident that happened some years later which, for women at least, has general application, and of which the fugue story reminds me. I once showed a big choral work to Levi, the great Wagner conductor — an open-minded man and one not afraid to look truth in the face. After hearing it he said: "I could never have believed that a woman wrote that!" I replied: "No, and what's more, in a week's time you won't believe it!" He looked at me a moment, and said slowly: "I believe you are right!" Prejudice was bound to prevail over the evidence of his senses and intellect — in the end he would surely feel there must have been a mistake somewhere! . . . It is this backwash that hampers women even more than material obstacles.

One day I had a small triumph over Brahms. Among my exercises for Herzogenberg were two-part "Inventions" in the Bach manner, and Lisl played him one of these as a new find unearthed by the Bach Society. In it was a certain harmonic turn not of Bach's time, but which he, who anticipated most things, might quite well have used, and Brahms's remark, which I must quote in the original, was: "*Dem Kerl fällt doch immer wieder was Neues ein!*" ("That fellow is always hitting on something new"). When the truth came out, the composer was warmly commended — and this time did not deserve it. It was just a bit of successful mimicry that any fairly clever musician might pull off.

But my greatest success with Brahms — who by the by held that everyone resembles some orchestral instrument and called me "the Oboe" — had nothing to do with music. Piqued by his low estimate of my sex, I wrote a little sarcastic poem the last verse of which ran:

*Der grosse Brahms hat's neulich ausgesprochen:
"Ein g'scheidtes Weib, das hat doch keinen Sinn!"
D'rum lasst uns emsig uns're Dummheit pflegen,
Denn nur auf diesem Punkt ist Werth zu legen
Als Weib und gute Brahmsianerin!*

Translation

*As the great Brahms recently proclaimed:
"A clever woman is a thing of naught!"
So let us diligently cultivate stupidity,
That being the only quality demanded
Of a female Brahms-admirer!*

That night he was at a supper given in his honour, and the mouth of everyone who approached him to talk about his music was stopped by his taking the poem out of his breast pocket and insisting on the unfortunate person reading it. This characteristic proceeding went on, I was told, throughout the evening and must have maddened the admirers.

In post-Leipzig days I saw little of him, but once when I was passing through Vienna and called on him, he was more than kind and cordial and begged me to fix up a meal at his house on my way back. Alas, when the time came he was away.

In jotting down these various impressions I am quite aware they do not do him justice. Even then I knew all about his wonderful generosity to poor musicians and old friends fallen on evil days. I noticed, too, that even the cynicism about women was belied by the extreme delicacy and tenderness of his work, and more especially by his choice of words to set to music. But all I can say is that this poetical insight did not determine his working theory (ascribed by some foolish persons to an early disappointment in love); and the point of memoirs — so it seems to me — is to relate what you saw yourself, not what other people, books, or subsequent reflections tell you. I saw integrity, sincerity, kindness of heart, generosity to opponents, and a certain nobility of soul that stamps all his music; but on the other hand I saw coarseness, uncivilizedness, a defective perception of subtle shades in people and things, lack of humour, and of course the inevitable and righteous selfishness of people who have a message of their own to deliver and can't run errands for others. When Wagner died he sent a wreath and was bitterly hurt at receiving no acknowledgment. A friend of the Wagners told me gloatingly that Cosima had said: "*Why should the wreath be acknowledged? I understand the man was no friend to Our Art*" — and my informant added: "It was a mistake to send it at all." . . . Of such was the Kingdom of Wagner.

The accounts that reached the world of his cruel illness and death were infinitely tragic, for he fought against his doom, they say, and, like a child when bedtime comes, wept and protested he did not want to go. The only consolation is to believe, as I for one do, that his best work was behind him, and that perhaps Nature did well to ring down the curtain.



CHAPTER XXV. *Spring* 1879

WHEN Brahms came to Leipzig, as he did nearly every winter, many other composers — unenvious admirers of the greater master such as Dvořák, Kirchner, Grieg, etc. — used to turn up by magic

to do him honour; and of course they all flocked to the Humboldtstrasse. My first meeting with Grieg, whom I afterwards came to know so well, I remember chiefly because of a well-deserved smack in the face it brought me. Grieg, whose tastes were catholic, greatly admired the works of Liszt. Now, it was the fashion in my world to despise Liszt as composer. But what had to be borne as coming from mature musicians may well have been intolerable in a student, and some remark of mine causing Grieg's fury to boil over, he suddenly enquired what the devil a twopenny-halfpenny whipper-snapper like me meant by talking thus of my betters. Next day at cockcrow the dear man came stumping up my stairs to apologize, and this incident laid the foundation of a very warm feeling between me and the Griegs which came to fruition later on.

During that winter my friendship with the Wachs grew and consolidated and, what is more, resulted in close relations between them and the Herzogenbergs. They had lived in the same town for two or three years, and I really believe would never have got beyond mere acquaintanceship but for some chance connecting link such as myself. As regards aloofness Lisl found her match in Lili (whom I shall allude to in these memoirs as "Lili Wach," to avoid confusion with "Lisl"); but once the ice was broken, the two women became intimate friends, and I often think the one thing Lisl stood slightly in awe of was the fastidious judgment and penetrating instinct of Lili Wach. Both the Herzogenbergs, who like myself were freethinkers, delighted in Wach, except at funerals and other functions involving religion, but they tolerated and even admired the simple piety of their old friend Frau von B. — mother of the Seven Ravens — in whom it was a fundamental, and not, as you sometimes felt with Wach, an excrescence.

By this time Leipzig balls no longer tempted me, but there were other opportunities for the display of finery, such as big routs at Frau Livia's or the Limburgers' in honour of passing celebrities. On these occasions Lisl took great interest in my personal appearance; like my mother she would waylay me in corners and passages with pins and hairpins that saved the situation, and alas! what had irritated me in the one case touched and delighted me in the other. My musical education was possibly being narrowed in that severely classical atmosphere, but I suppose every scheme of education is

either too narrow or too diffuse. Certainly the impulse towards opera, of which I had been conscious in the days of Mr. Ewing, was checked for the moment. Though exception was made of course in favour of Mozart and *Fidelio*, my group considered opera a negligible form of art, probably because Brahms had wisely avoided a field in which he would not have shone and of which the enemy, Wagner, was in possession. Besides this, the Golden Age of Leipzig had been orchestral and oratorial, and both musicians and concert public were suspicious of music-drama. The old families, who had been rooted in their Gewandhaus seats from time immemorial, seldom hired boxes at the Opera — partly, perhaps, because under the system of *abonnement* it was played alternately with drama; anyhow it was not the fashion among our Leipzig grandees. I used to go and hear *Carmen*, still my favourite opera, whenever I had a chance, and was indignant at Herzogenberg's patronizing remark that Bizet was no doubt *ein Geniechen* (a little genius). But in that school Bizet, Chopin, and all the great who talk tragedy with a smile on their lips, who dart into the depths and come up again instantly like divers — who, in fact, decline to wallow in the Immensities — all these were habitually spoken of as small people. How I thought of this madness the other day when someone repeated to me a remark Forain had just made at luncheon: "*L'art se tient dans le creux de la main!*" It appeared they had been discussing Wagner, who evidently was not of Forain's way of thinking, having written operas the length of which always seemed to me artistically arrogant — a wilful ignoring of the limits set by nature to human receptivity. But Wagner is, among other things, the greatest hypnotizer the world has ever seen, and for the hypnotized time does not exist.

Another curious thing about the Brahms group was that orchestration apparently failed to interest them; consequently it played no part in my instruction. No one holds more strongly than the writer that content comes first, before you speak it is well to have something definite to say. But in that circle what you may call the *external*, the merely pleasing element in music, was so little insisted on that its motto really might have been the famous "take care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves" — hardly an adequate outfit for a musician even if the sounds did

take care of themselves, which they do not. Once some Orchestral Variations of Herzogenberg's were performed which I scarcely recognized for the same I had admired as one of the inevitable piano duets, so bad was the instrumentation.

But whatever the defects of my environment may have been, in it I learned the necessity, and acquired the love, of hard work, as well as becoming imbued with a deep passion for Bach, which I think is in itself an education. As I indicated elsewhere, Herzogenberg and his Berlin collaborators were constantly discovering and editing new wonders, and though the Leipzig branch of the Bach Verein was not a very grand affair, the arrangement and production of these three-hundred-year-old novelties was enthralling to him and us. In the early autumn and late spring it was our custom to give concerts in small neighbouring town-lands, starting early in various reserved third-class compartments, dining at an inn, and contriving to walk back part of the way towards evening through the woods. Owing to the benighted pitch of the organs in some of these remote country churches, there was not infrequently trouble with the wind instruments, and on one occasion, a certain organ being in particularly bad repute, the Herzogenbergs and I paid it a preliminary visit armed with a horn. He understood the valves but could not produce a sound; I, on the contrary, to whom the valves were and are a mystery, could at least blow a hunting-horn. Meanwhile Lisl, physically a model St. Cecilia but knowing less than nothing about that saint's instrument, sat at the keyboard holding a piercing and uncontrollable "a," and thus between us we found out what the possibilities were of a friendly relation between horn and organ. The sacristan was scandalized, for though we were in church, of course we nearly died of laughing.

On these concert expeditions Lisl devoted herself assiduously, as was only politic, for our funds were never brilliant, to adoring members and their rich friends. All-day excursions with almost any group of people are a trial, but one moment was always exquisite. We used to take part-songs with us, and after drinking coffee in some woodland restaurant a more romantic spot in the forest was selected, the tuning fork banged on a stone, and in that divinest of

concert-rooms we made divine music. To be in the Bach Verein at all proved you were a serious, indeed often an over-serious and exceedingly narrow-minded musician, and if some of our members were not in their first youth, zeal atoned for worn-out vocal cords. And the crown of all was that the whole thing came to about one shilling sixpence per head.

By the time Good Friday came round again, Papa Röntgen considered me fit to take my place among the second violins in the annual *Passion* performance — no great compliment as will presently be seen — imploring me passionately to keep my eye on the leader and not cut in at wrong moments in my excitement. These performances — held in the very Thomas Kirche for which the work was originally written, and of which Mendelssohn, who rediscovered the *Passion*, had made a great tradition — are among the most unforgettable experiences of my life. The proceeds were devoted to the Widows and Orphans Fund of the Gewandhaus orchestra, but according to a curious by-law, only those who had taken an active part in the performance had a claim on that year's balance. Now, many modern instruments have no place in the orchestra of Bach's time; consequently trombones, bass clarinets, and other outsiders vamped up in spare hours enough violin to scrape their way through Bach's very easy string parts, sitting generally in the ranks of the second violins. And so vilely did they play that I quite understood why I had been allowed to join them. This was the only time I ever performed in an orchestra, and, as may be imagined under the circumstances, I was astonished at the hideous noises produced round about me — and still more astonished the following year, when I sat below, to notice how little it matters in a big choral work what goes on at some of the second desks!

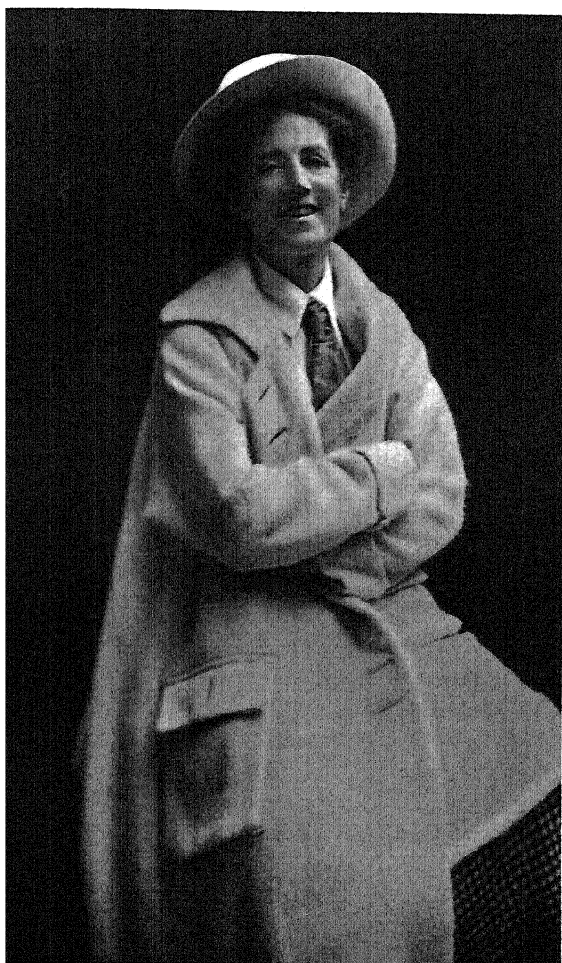
I count it as one of the great privileges vouchsafed me that I learned to love the *Passion* in that place of places, the prestige and acoustic properties of which make up for the dreariness of its architecture. In one of the side galleries, close up to the orchestra, which was grouped aloft in front of the organ, sat the Thomaner School-boys, representatives of the very choir of which Bach was Cantor. I suppose realizing these things has something to do with it, but

never, so it seems to me, is the Chorale in the opening chorus so overwhelming as when trumpeted forth with the pride of lawful heirs by the Thomaner Chor.

I despair of giving an idea of the devoutness of the audience. Generally speaking, most of the inhabitants of Leipzig, including nearly everyone I knew, were either exceedingly conventional churchgoers or unbelievers, but on this occasion the dull mist of religious indifference appeared to lift for the time being. It was not only that the church seemed flooded with the living presence of Bach, but you felt as if the *Passion* itself, in that heart-rending, consoling portrayal, was being lived through as at no other moment of their lives by every soul in the vast congregation. This is the divine part of listening to such music in company with people who have known and loved every note of it ever since they were born, whose natural language it is. I suppose every artist can say of one or two hours in the past that in these he touched the extreme height and depth of his emotional life; such hours were mine during a certain *Passion* performance in the Thomas Kirche, in a time of great trouble, a few years later.

The Good Friday solemnity is the supreme flower and conclusion of the Leipzig musical season, and shortly afterwards Lisl's father and mother appeared on the scene, but at different moments, for they did not get on and seldom met. I had been requested when in England to send some fairy-book "for my mother, who is herself a regular old fairy-tale." When I saw Baroness von Stockhausen, *née* Gräfin Baudissin, I said to myself: "The Wicked Godmother!" and looking the other day at a superb bust of her by Hildebrand,¹ belonging to one of her grandchildren, there is no denying that this portrait of the Evil Genius of my life bears out that idea. This old woman, handsome, gifted, violent as ten devils rolled into one, who looked like a Louis XV marquise, I found very attractive, and hoped she would like me; but unfortunately I was hated at first sight with the vitriolic jealousy of one who had never permitted her children to have friends, or even playmates. Herzogenberg, who was rather fond of his mother-in-law, once said that but for his Jesuit training he could never have achieved the winning of his

¹ Reproduced, p. 342.



[FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY OLIVE EDIS

Ethel Smyth, 1916

bride, and I noticed that this jocular reference to that agitating time rather distressed Lisl.

The father was an icy-cold Hanoverian nobleman for whom the world had ceased revolving round the sun on the day when the Court of Hanover, to which he had been Minister, was liquidated. After a first brief meeting with these two august personages I was implored to shun the house during the remainder of their respective visits. Lisl was deeply pained and humiliated by her mother's outrageous unfriendliness towards one in whom she had professed the most charming interest, but there was nothing to be done. As well reason with Vesuvius. Then, for the first time, I noticed my friend's abject terror of conflicts . . . and also her inability to cope with them.



CHAPTER XXVI. *Summer 1879 to Summer 1880*

I WAS about to say most truthfully that I remember absolutely nothing about the holidays of 1879, when turning to Lisl's letters I find to my astonishment that for a brief moment marriage had been spoken of! Perhaps it was in connection with the one and only chance I had, or thought I had, of making a "brilliant" marriage — a transitory afterglow of the "Social Ambition phase" — which promised both leisure for work and more money. As I have forgotten no real inner experience however mad and foolish, and had utterly forgotten this, the matrimonial mood must have been quite evanescent, but Lisl's letters,¹ which exhibit her pure, lofty view of life in its perfection, followed one another in swift agony. It was one of those storms in a teacup which sprang up again and again in the course of our friendship; she never grasped how strongly, yet how lightly, passing moods affect people of the impressionable type, and each time was overwhelmed afresh with apprehension.

¹ Appendix, p. 277, No. 12; p. 278, No. 13.

During the following autumn in Leipzig I heard Pan-Germanism talked for the first time. It was at a dinner party, and the exponent was Dr. Simson, a wise, polished old Jew, President of the Imperial Court of Justice, which as a sop to Saxony sits at Leipzig. Wach, who was my neighbour, and suspected of aiming at the presidency of the *Reichs-Gericht* himself, whispered in my ear that the whole thing was a wild-goose scheme. Presently the handsome, grey-haired old President, bending across the table in the most courtly way, trusted that the charming young foreign lady whose presence was such a delight to everyone, etc., etc., would not resent what he was about to say, namely that England was now on the downgrade. So it had been successively with Spain, Holland, and France, the world progressing on the wheel system. And the country now swinging to the top, and about to relieve us of the sceptre, was — “our beloved Fatherland.” That conversation remained in my memory chiefly because of the speaker’s tactful gilding of this pill, his discourse being shot through with complimentary references to the great part borne by us in civilization. As for his thesis that England was played out, it seemed too ridiculous to get angry about.

I cannot remember whether the new doctrine was ventilated conversationally or in a speech; where professors are present the two things are much the same, and the occasion being rather a grand one, there were many speeches that day. I was by no means insular, I think; a great many German institutions that would not appeal to the Anglo-Saxon temperament, such as the periodical excursions into the country of musical and other guilds, the Sunday trooping forth of whole families into the woods, and even the *Stammtisch* — a table at restaurants reserved night after night for the same group of bores — I found, and still find, charming. But a practice no amount of familiarity ever reconciled me to was speechifying.

The Germans say of themselves that wherever three of their nation are gathered together — say at the North Pole — they instantly found a “Society”; if so I believe it is chiefly in order to have an excuse for making speeches. You never were safe from them. Even at gatherings of old friends and relations your heart would leap into your mouth at the familiar slow tap-tap on a wineglass, followed by the sacramental words “*Verehrte Anwesende!*” (Honoured ones here present!) while an expression of satisfaction, such as must

steal over the faces of watchers on the Rigi when the sun rises, transfigured all countenances — including those of would-be modern people who pretended to dislike speechifying.

I once saw a terrible thing happen at a birthday feast given by Frau von B—. The parquet floor was very slippery, the chairs — of the high-backed top-heavy antique kind — had arms, and the guests were so numerous that these arms were touching one another. A pale, melancholy man with dank black hair who sat next the hostess rose with some difficulty, as a sardine might rise out of a freshly opened box, and made one of those speeches which cause honoured ones there present to stare at their plates and roll bread-pellets, the theme being the merits of the deceased master of the house. It was well meant and no doubt sincere, but more than usually platitudinal, involved, and sham-pathetic. When at last, after an over-intimate peroration, the speaker sat down suddenly as if overcome by emotion, the chair slid away from behind him and he absolutely disappeared from view, to be grasped under the armpits and hoisted up, swathed in folds of embroidered table-cloth, by the horror-stricken ladies to right and left of him. No one smiled; the tone of the speech made it impossible to pass the thing off as a joke, to express regret, or do anything but pretend no one had noticed the incident. And this feat we all accomplished.

On the other hand the fairs, of which I had spoken disparagingly in an early letter home, ended by completely captivating my fancy. The great autumn fair, with its ramshackle booths and strangely costumed traders from all parts of the world, including Polish Jews of a concentrated essence of Israel seldom seen in England, was really picturesque; and what redeemed it from the vulgarity of the same thing at international exhibitions was the knowledge that everyone was there on business only. We particularly loved the crockery market, which was held on the picturesque side of the town; all the wares were strewn pell-mell on the ground, and alas! uncouth, savagely coloured descendants of antique pottery of beautiful design were already being crowded out by the forerunners of *l'Art Nouveau*; when you chose one of them the saleswomen thought you must be mad. But I think I loved the Christmas fair best, for then Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane, the large open space between the Museum and the New Theatre being turned

into a forest of snow-covered little firs. Whole families went forth to choose the Christmas-tree, each child shriekingly recommending a different one till "*mein Mann*" finally clinched the matter.

The Christmas of 1879 I spent in Berlin. There had been much lamentation on my part because the Herzogenbergs were suddenly summoned to spend the festival with her mother at the Austrian aunt's Schloss, but shortly before their departure I made the acquaintance of a couple, the Conrad Fiedlers, who were destined to play a great part in my life. He was the younger son of a grand old Leipzigerinn who lived with her eldest son's family in the town house in winter, and at her beautiful country place a few miles off in the summer. All the Fiedlers were very rich, and why the Conrads had settled at Berlin I never could make out, for they both detested it and were on the point of migrating to her native town, Munich.

Conrad was of a type you seldom meet in Germany, a fairly well-known writer on philosophical subjects, an acknowledged authority on painting and sculpture, a generous patron of struggling talent, and yet — oh wonder! attached to no Institution — merely a gentleman at large. More than usually encased in a certain Saxon frigidity that contrasts strangely with the geniality of the other brand of Saxon, I noticed that everyone secretly coveted his esteem and that his word always carried weight. His wife was one of those people whom all portrait painters pursue, more especially if the husband is a wealthy art patron. At that time she was quite young, tall and striking-looking, with daring, gloriously blue eyes, yellow-gold hair, and incomparable colouring. Unlike most of the friends mentioned in these pages she is still alive, therefore I will merely say that we were very fond of each other for years, and that later on, after her first husband's death, when she and Frau Wagner became great friends, we gradually drifted apart. A gulf was bound to open up sooner or later between intimates of Wahnfried and people refractory to the Wagner cultus. Meanwhile, whether at Munich, at Crostewitz (his mother's country house, where an ideal summer retreat had been contrived for them at one end of the homely farm quadrangle attached to the Schloss), or at their Florentine Villino, their kindness to me was inexhaustible.

I first met these new friends, as I said, before what promised to be a desolate Christmas bereft of Lisl, and with the warm impulsiveness which was her chief charm, Mary Fiedler bore me off to Berlin then and there.

Curiously enough I can remember nothing about my first impressions of the town itself, but plenty about the people I met there. Of the Joachims I saw a good deal. She was the finest contralto I ever heard, and until she got too fat, the Orpheus of one's dreams. Joachim according to all English people was of course perfection, but I saw him in another setting and never wholly liked him — perhaps among other reasons because trouble was even then brewing in his house and all my sympathies were with the wife, who, though socially far less satisfactory than her husband, was a warm, living human being. I wished she would not crawl under the supper table in a fit of New Year jollity, armed with a hat-pin, but why did Joachim allow it, I asked myself. Why did he sit serenely at the head of the table looking like a planed-down Jupiter and utter no remonstrance? In a certain letter² Rubinstein's answer to this riddle may be found, and though obviously grotesque, it proves that I was not the only Joachim-heretic in the world. That evening Joachim told me he had just heard Melba, and raved about her; "How can one speak of coldness," he asked, "in connection with such phrasing?" Perhaps he knew that the same accusation was often levelled against himself, and in both cases it is obvious what people meant — the "coldness," compared to Renaissance work, of the Delphic Charioteer, which is not to everyone's taste.

Early in these memoirs I told how a fully fledged but not very bright cousin of mine expected to see smoke coming up through the water when trains passed under the Basingstoke Canal — an anecdote some people believe with difficulty. I can relate a fact, also on oath, about that exceptionally intelligent and cultivated man, Joachim, which I find still more incredible, namely that in the year 1880 or thereabouts he had no notion that the figures on the metronome refer to the number of beats per minute. Herzogenberg, speechless with amazement, seized him by the lapel of his coat: "But what then, dear friend," he asked, "do you represent

² See p. 354.

to yourself when you set it?" "Nothing!" answered Joachim; "I note the tempo but have never troubled my head about the basis of the matter. . . . I supposed it was — well, just like that!" Whereupon Lisl remarked: "Thank God! now I hope Heinrich will cease talking about women's unarithmetical brains."

It was in Berlin that Christmas that I first met Rubinstein, and in unexpected mood too. A totally talentless maiden, relying I suppose on her great beauty — for his weaknesses were notorious — had insisted on playing to him with a view to being advised as to whether she should make music her career. When she had done he remarked quite simply: "How should *you* ever become an artist?" and then, taking up her hand, he pointed in succession to her fingers, her forehead, and her heart, slowly saying "*hier nix, hier nix, und hier nix!*" — a terrible sequence of nothingness that needs no translation. There was one thing only that roused the mild-mannered Conrad Fiedler to frenzy — half talents, and when I reported this incident he was delighted.

I also saw a good deal of two paladins of Brahms's, Philip Spitta, the chief excavator and editor of lost Bach treasures, and Chrysander, the biographer of Handel, who told me there were masses of yet undeciphered early English music in the British Museum compared to which the work of Palestrina and Co. was the groping of children, or words to that effect. After Brahms's death two letters of mine were returned to me (one being written at Sir George Grove's request to beg the loan of the *Tragic Overture* for the Crystal Palace concerts) and I find I well rubbed in the learned Chrysander's tribute to despised England. When next we met, Brahms asked me to play him some Scotch music, and after listening to one of those archaic reels the first phrase of which is, for instance, in D major and the second in C major, the remark was: "And this people claims to be musical"! . . .

Fiedler's collection was very fine, and ranged from a superb Holbein to the early works of the great German sculptor Hildebrand, whose first patron he was and whom he completely relieved from the necessity of prostituting his genius. There were also plenty of modern German pictures (including about ten portraits of Mary) — Feuerbach and Böcklin, who by the by was Swiss, being the only names I can recall; but in the Museum, introducing me to

Manet and the French school, he once remarked: "Of course one must encourage native talent but oh, for something on this level!" Feuerbach I thought the bore of bores and loathed Stuck, but Manet seemed impossible to take seriously. I marvelled at Conrad's enthusiasm though certain he was right, for one felt he knew. He introduced me to his great friend Bode, Director, or perhaps then he was only Sub-Director, of the Museum. I never was sorrier for anyone than for that man when I next saw him, in 1901. Under a monarch who did not himself paint, he had got together a wonderful collection of modern pictures, the apple of his eye. But now he was in deep disgrace; the pictures were stowed away under the roof, where it was hoped no one would clamber up to see them, and there had been a moment, fortunately staved off, when a particularly fine Zuloaga seemed likely to leave Berlin for ever by command of the All-Highest. Altogether that short stay in Berlin was most kindling, and was to lead to further developments before long.

Meanwhile I was being a subject of strife in a distant ancestral home. Lisl wrote of "my poor mother's King Lear-like feelings," and when we met in Leipzig I gathered that the family meeting had not been an unqualified success.

That winter two English friends turned up, St. John Brodrick and another man I will not name, merely saying that he afterwards became Headmaster of one of our great public schools and was considered in England to be very musical, mainly because he sang German songs in German. I introduced him of course to my friends, but what I did not bargain for was his proposing to perform himself and asking Lisl to accompany his wooden, business-like rendering of a particularly romantic song of Brahms's, the refrain of which gave full scope for our very peculiar English "r." The effect was indescribably comic. I, naturally, was covered with shame; as for Lisl, she literally laid her head on the music to conceal her laughter, while the singer plodded on sturdily, far too pleased with himself to notice anything. But whereas she was only amused at this exhibition and forthwith added an incomparable bit of mimicry to her repertory, Herzogenberg was irritated at the bottomless cheek

of this countryman of mine, especially after he had upset the cream-jug over Lisl's black velvet gown, merely remarking: "That comes of gesticulating."

In April the Herzogenbergs went to Italy, and my longing, inflamed by contact with the Fiedlers, to go there myself was such that I begged her, as in the case of hunting in the home correspondence, never to mention the word "Italy" in her letters — a piece of unreasonableness and intense selfishness that serene well-balanced person could not understand but reproachfully gave in to. On my mother's birthday, June 2, there was a performance at the Wachs' by Röntgen and his team of a string quartet of mine, a mere piece of student's work of course. I have said hard things about German speechifying, but on this occasion Wach made a most beautiful little speech about my mother, and about absent friends who did their best to replace her as regards one of her children. By that time Lisl's raillery had almost cured my childish habit of tears, but it was difficult to keep them back then. There were two great bonds between me and Lili Wach, who was very religious — my thorough knowledge of the Bible, and my devotion to my mother — and I noticed this speech of her husband's moved her as much as it did me. Afterwards I got up and silently kissed him; the action wasn't ridiculous and seemed so to no one. I don't think anything ever gave my mother greater pleasure than hearing about that evening.

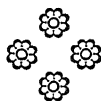
Part of the early summer of 1880 I spent at Crostewitz, and was thrilled to see the small round cannon balls of 1813 still sticking in the walls of the house. Madame Fiedler, as everyone called Conrad's mother (a nomenclature dating from the cannon-ball era and which seemed only to have survived in her case), kept open house, and on Saturdays and Sundays the lake and skittle-ground swarmed with the "nice" people of the neighbourhood, reinforced by stiffly buttoned-up, heel-clicking officers from the garrison. Later on, a gorgeous supper was served in a big verandah fronting the wood-girt lake, followed by cards for the seniors, and society games, boating, and flirtation for the juniors. Madame Fiedler was passionately fond of whist, and one evening I heard her remark to a profusely decorated General and Excellenz who had just lost her the game, that she feared the young ones were better at love-making than their elders at cards. This characteristic little dig, delivered with a

pensive, kindly smile, went home, the Excellenz's spendthrift son, a Lieutenant in the Guards, being at that moment engaged in exploring the woods with a penniless beauty. Mary, who detested these gatherings, would generally plead ill health and retire to her vast bed, where she partook of a delicate supper and half a bottle of champagne. Country joys did not appeal to her, and most of her time at Crostewitz was spent in that bed.

Madame Fiedler's eldest son, Philipp, goodnaturedly gave me the run of his stable, and the two astonished carriage horses were driven tandem about the tortuous, rut-riven lanes. One of them, a grey whose hind-quarters I thought looked like jumping, was even urged over the fences on the steeplechase course. Once we came a terrific crash which slightly crippled both me and my mount for a time and nearly killed Madame Fiedler, who though the most masterful of old *châtelaines* was exceedingly nervous about animals. Dreamy Doctor Philipp — of course like all cultivated Germans he had taken his degree in philosophy — was a poet of real talent gone to seed (for unfortunately he versified as some people chatter, without reflection or self-control), and the result of this adventure was a fantastic poetical drama in which all the personages of our little world were introduced with pseudonyms of the *Pilgrim's Progress* kind. For instance Mary was "Lockenlicht" (Shining-locks), Herzogenberg "Canonicus Fugenfürst" (Canon Fugue-prince), Lisl "Etherzart" (Delicate-as-Ether), the author himself, who had been much blamed by his wife and mother for lending me the horse, "Doctor Unbedacht" (Doctor Thoughtless), and so on.

This kindly man had one little weakness, a tendency to exaggerated thrift, and if everyone had not already known that Madame Fiedler's open-handed hospitality caused her heir some heartburnings, they would have guessed it from his naïve choice of a pseudonym for her — "Frau Spendegern" (Mrs. Glad-to-Spend). In conclusion the play was called "Miss Hopp-in-die-Welt" — here no translation is required — and was supposed to be very complimentary to the heroine, but to see ourselves as others see us is seldom all satisfaction. I mention this amazing production, in which there are some very pretty verses, because the whole incident was so typical.

That spring there was a good deal of tennis at Dölitz, the Limburgers' country house (though the real Dölitz period came later), and there was also a plan of my going to Oberammergau with Johanna Röntgen; but the absurd thing is that I cannot remember whether it came off or whether I only assisted at the performance in the illustrated papers — pests that take the edge off everything but acutest first-hand impressions. Anyhow I know that I eventually joined my mother at Homburg, she having been convoyed thither, very ill, by one of my married sisters, and remember her maid remarking scornfully as she struggled with the usual chest of drawers fitted with one key only: "I suppose the Germans don't know what knobs is." After that we went on to Ragatz, where, alas! as at Homburg, I jeered at Mother's enthusiasm for the Kurhaus bands. On the way home we spent a couple of days in Paris; although she was hardly able to stand, a few new bonnets were picked up, and on this journey, as ever when she was really ill, her pluck and cheerfulness filled me with admiration. And so to England, where the financial situation was much discussed and nothing radical done to meet it.



CHAPTER XXVII. *Summer 1880 to Summer 1881*

WHILE travelling with my mother I had been told about a charming newcomer in our neighbourhood whom she had as yet seen little of, but who was said to be very musical and looking forward to meeting the Leipzig daughter. Knowing what "very musical" amounts to in England, expectation did not run high, but on the day she had been asked to lunch I sat down at the piano, just for fun, as her dogcart drew up at the door, and began playing *Im Freien* — a Schubert song I was wild about just then. Presently a very nice-looking woman of the smart sporting type was ushered in who cheerfully uttered the words: "Ah! dear old Chopsticks!" . . . The drawback of this anecdote is that probably few serious musicians

know "Chopsticks," and the sort of people who know "Chopsticks" are still less likely to know *Im Freien*. I shall therefore give a few bars of each, and to simplify matters will transpose "Chopsticks" for the first time in its life into the key of the other — five flats.

Chopsticks

*Im Freien*

Fortunately there was one person present worthy this moment, my mother.

On the other hand, during these holidays I was destined to meet a person in whose existence I did not believe: an Englishwoman of my own type — that is, one not born to the profession, with whom I could associate musically on equal terms; and as she lived only ten miles off, it became my habit to fly over to see her whenever I could, generally with a roll of music paper tied on to my saddle. Thus began the friendship between me and Adela Wodehouse (wife of Mr. Edmund Wodehouse, M.P. for Bath), a friendship which was the chief musical stimulus of my life in England, and which has lasted to this day — unchanged but for the patina that all things real, solid, and delicate acquire with years.

That summer I sang enough Schubert to satisfy even my mother. Papa, though wholly unmusical, liked soft music after dinner, and there was one song we christened "Papa's Surprise" for he never recognized it. Each time it began he would say: "Now I like that," and gradually his *Times* would sink on to his knees and his eyes close. The song is Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh* — for two verses the gentlest strain ever penned; but in the third, at the words (I translate literally) "This canopy of thine eyes, by thy brilliance . . . ALONE . . . LIGHTED!" it suddenly surges and very quickly too, to a crash on a high note — after which there is a pause. At this point again and again Papa would wake up with a start and say: "Hullo! — is that the gun?"

During these holidays a case of misinterpreted symptoms occurred which I cite as a warning to mothers and aunts. Mary Hunter's second baby, Phyllis, a very pretty child with big blue eyes, showed such an extraordinary sensibility to music — straining out of her nurse's arms till her head almost touched the keyboard — that we concluded, much to her father's horror, she must be a musical genius. But she turned out to be merely an exceptionally highly strung child; and though in after years she bore the infliction of a musical aunt with heroism, she rather dislikes music than otherwise.

And now, on the eve of chronicling yet another great friendship, the moment has come to express regret that unlike other women writers of memoirs, such as Sophie Kowalewski, George Sand, and Marie Bashkirtseff — if for a moment I may class myself with such as these — I have so far no orthodox love-affairs to relate, neither soulful sentiment for musician of genius, nor perilous passion conceived among the reeds of the Crostewitz Lake for proud Prussian guardsman. In my letters to Lisl, where all the secrets of my heart stand revealed, I again and again express a conviction it is foolish to insist upon, so obvious is it, that the most perfect relation of all must be the love between man and woman, but this seemed to me, given my life and outlook, probably an unachievable thing. Where should be found the man whose existence could blend with mine without loss of quality on either side? My work must, and would always, be the first consideration, and as I said elsewhere, the idea that men might think one wanted to catch them checked incipient

romance. For a space I had imagined myself in love with the husband of one of my friends, *not* Aloysius by the by! — a ridiculous fancy at once confessed to his wife, who was rather gratified and not at all alarmed. This fleeting sentiment was mastered and consigned to limbo without its object being any the wiser; and all the time I was more or less aware that had this individual been eligible such an idea would never have entered my head. As in the case of my own admirers, immunity from consequences favoured the tender illusion of a hopeless attachment. What Fate had in reserve for me as regards the supremest relation of all who could say? . . . Meanwhile, as my mother wrote in a letter to a friend, the desire to be looked after, helped, and loved was as imperative as the instinct of independence that seemed predominant. And as, in order to receive you must give . . . give I did!

Let me say here that all my life, even when after years had brought me the seemingly unattainable, I have found in women's affection a peculiar understanding, mothering quality that is a thing apart. Perhaps too I had a foreknowledge of the difficulties that in a world arranged by man for man's convenience beset the woman who leaves the traditional path to compete for bread and butter, honours and emoluments — difficulties honest men are more aware of, perhaps, than she of the sheltered life. I had no theories about it then but I think I guessed it. Even among the conformists I saw good, brave women obliged because of their sex to give way before dullness, foolishness, or brutality; and in natures inclined to side with the handicapped these things kindle sympathy and admiration. And further it is a fact, as H. B. once remarked, that the people who have helped me most at difficult moments of my musical career, beginning with my own sister Mary, have been members of my own sex. Thus it comes to pass that my relations with certain women, all exceptional personalities I think, are shining threads in my life.

In one of her letters Jane Austen remarks that so-and-so is "too apt to like people" — a tendency which is possibly a sign of a generous temperament, as one would like to believe, but which also implies lack of self-control, and sometimes a wilful drugging of one's critical faculties. Owing to this weakness I often made mistakes, yet only one bad one — a misfortune mentioned from honesty, as it happened long after the date at which these memoirs close. And I may

add that if the world is inclined to scoff or speak ill of women's friendships, this is one of those cheap generalities which will pass muster only as long as women let men do their thinking for them, and which moreover are given the lie to by the experience of many who hand them round, did they but choose to testify. Having said this I will now pass on to the next on my list of great friendships.

Barbara Hamley had often spoken to me of Agnes and Rhoda Garrett, who were among the first women in England to start business on their own account and by that time were well-known house decorators of the Morris school. Agnes was sister to Mrs. Fawcett and Dr. Garrett Anderson — Rhoda, their cousin, rather older than Agnes, daughter of a clergymen whose second wife had practically turned her predecessor's children out of the house to fend for themselves. Late in the autumn Barbara introduced me to these great friends of hers, and during the next two years their house became the focus of my English life owing to the friendship that sprung up between Rhoda and me.

Both women were a good deal older than I, how much I never knew — nor wished to know, for Rhoda and I agreed that age and income are relative things concerning which statistics are tiresome and misleading. How shall one describe that magic personality of hers, at once elusive and clear-cut, shy and audacious? — a dark cloud with a burning heart — something that smoulders in repose and bursts into flame at a touch. . . . Though the most alive, amusing, and amused of people, to me at least the sombre background was always there — perhaps because the shell was so obviously too frail for the spirit. One knew of the terrible struggle in the past to support herself and the young brothers and sisters; that she had been dogged by ill health as well as poverty — heroic, unflinching through all. Agnes once said to me: "Rhoda has had more pain in her life than was good for her," but no one guessed that like her brother Edmund — champion of Rhodes, youthful collaborator with Lord Milner, cut off at the zenith of his powers — she carried in her the seeds of tubercular disease. And yet when the end came there was little of surprise in one's grief; thus again and again had one seen falling stars burn out.

I spoke of her humour; on the whole I think she was more amus-

ing than anyone else I have ever met — a wit half-scornful, always surprising, as unlike everyone else's as was her person . . . a slim, lithe being, very dark, with deep-set burning eyes that I once made her laugh by saying reminded me of a cat in a coal scuttle. Yet cats' eyes are never tender, and hers could be the tenderest in the world.

I always think the feel of a hand as it grasps yours is a determining factor in human relationships, and all her friends must well remember Rhoda's — the soft, soft skin that only dark people have, the firm, wiry, delicate fingers. My reason tells me she was almost plain, but one looked at no one else when she was in a room. There was an enigmatic quality in her witchery behind which the grand lines, the purity and nobility of her soul, stood out like the bone in some enchanted landscape. No one had a more subtle hold on the imagination of her friends, and when she died it was as if laughter, astonishment, warmth, light, mystery, had been cut off at the source. The beauty of the relation between the cousins, and of that home life in Gower Street, remains with us who knew them as certain musical phrases haunt the melomaniac, and but for Agnes, who stood as far as was possible between her and the slings and arrows which are the reward of pioneers, no doubt Rhoda's life would have spent itself earlier. Her every burden, human and otherwise, was shouldered by Agnes, and both had a way of discovering waifs and strays of art more or less worsted by life whose sanctuary their house henceforth became.

Soon after making their acquaintance I went back to Leipzig with a new interest to look forward to for my next stay in England.

There is not much to relate about that autumn and winter in Germany. The various musical events, sonatas and quartets hopelessly composed and privately performed, though enthralling incidents at the time, are of no interest in after years to anyone — not even to the composer herself. But March 1881 I well remember, for a stray reference shows it was then that I paid my first visit to a princely castle — a real castle this time.

There was a certain young Prince Reuss cramming under Wach for his law degree, who was a very gifted composer and might have gone far but for his high estate. This youth, too delicate to propose it himself (for Herzogenberg only taught me as a special favour),

implored me to persuade Aloysius to give him lessons, which Aloysius, who had a strange passion for teaching, consented to do. And often did he complain, both before Reuss and behind his back, of the new pupil's *durchlauchtige Schlamperei* (Serene-Highness-like slovenliness). I thus saw a great deal of this young man, who was very attentive, so much so that Brahms's joke of the moment was to call me "*die durchlauchtige Miss*." Frau Livia, too, thought well to remind me that the alliances of these princelings are as carefully regulated as those of the Hohenzollerns themselves — a warning that half amused, half infuriated me. Frau Livia never could understand that from my point of view Reuss was no more a possible husband than a chimney-sweep — in fact less so, for I might have ridden rough-shod over the sweep but never over the traditions of a mediatized princeling. Yet it rather provoked me, and Lisl too, that safely entrenched in the Almanach de Gotha, Reuss seemed to think he could flirt with an ineligible young woman as much as he pleased — King Cophetua miraculously inoculated against possible complications with the beggar-maid.

The Reusses, as may be gathered from bewildering reference to them in contemporaneous history, are all named Heinrich and numbered, the numbers running up to sixty and then starting afresh. The reigning Reuss-Köstritz, our Heinrich's father, was rather a nice old man, almost as musical as his son, and there were two very friendly daughters a little older than I, one of whom married the King of Bulgaria. They once told me comically and truly that they were *langweilig aber herzvoll* (dull but full of heart). Their brother, Heinrich XXIV, was saved from commonplaceness by an abounding sense of humour, which now and again stopped dead at unexpected places — as often happens with German princes.

To the castle of these potentates, when it became impossible for the home-loving Herzogenbergs to go on refusing repeated invitations, did we repair. The manner of life seemed curious to me but was I believe typical: a mixture of formality and unbending, of lavishness and pettifogging economy not without humorous charm. Certain features of it horrified my democratic fellow guests. For instance the fare of the singing mistress, a Leipzig gentlewoman treated by them as family friend, was included in her yearly fee on a second-class basis, which was quite reasonable since it is a German saying

that only princes, English people, and fools travel first-class. But if by chance they travelled together, which sometimes happened, as the princesses often shopped in Leipzig, they would converse with this lady amicably on the platform and then stalk into their own first-class compartment, never dreaming of asking her to join them. From start to finish of our stay music was made, and it was the same when a few days later I went to Weimar to visit a connection, Cecilia Wodehouse, who had married a certain Baron von Liliencron, cousin of Herzogenberg and an admirable cellist. What has always seemed to me the only thing that counts, being a matter that boom and fashion cannot affect, is the general level of musical intelligence in a country, including the part played by art in domestic life; and certainly at that time Germany was ideal in that respect.

That year the fury of the Germans raged over the South African War, and I then fully realized a fact of which incidents such as the scene with the musical stationer had given me an inkling; namely, that, unutterably kind as everyone was to me personally — and let me say once for all that forty volumes of memoirs would not exhaust that theme — England had become an object of jealous detestation to the coming race of political thinkers in Germany. Unfortunately every male German seemed to be a politician, and I was assailed on all sides, cross-questioned, and bullied about our South African muddles till at last I wrote to my father asking for a few good arguments. As there were none, no wonder his replies were unconvincing.

That spring someone lent me a well-bred little mare and, remembering the Fiedler incident, carefully informed me she could not jump. But one day I met a hilarious party driving a wagon full gallop in a field lane, and when I pressed her up against some stout rails to make room, she suddenly leapt them sideways in a style only an accomplished fencer could manage without coming to grief. Put at them in orthodox fashion her performance was so brilliant that I persuaded the owner to let me ride her in a *Schnitzel Jagd* — mild steeplechases got up periodically by the Leipzig young men. If I had won I should certainly remember and record the fact.

When the time came round again for leaving Leipzig, love of *Faust* and curiosity to see old German architecture took me home via the Harz, Brunswick, and Hildesheim. The Brocken, viewed at

midday in the wrong light, looked so insignificant and hideous that I wished I had never gone there, but the old towns made up for it; also Bremen, where as a special favour, and in spite of the South African War, I was allowed to taste the famous century-old wine kept in a vat as big as a small house. It was like stale gooseberry wine only nastier. These journeys were conducted on such economical lines that they cost less, all told, than a through ticket to England. Herzogenberg once said, after we had been on a joint excursion somewhere, that at every place I came to I made for the most villainous-looking hotel I could find and asked for a *Kutscher Zimmer* (a cabman's room), which was more or less true. But what matter; who cares about comfort in early life? At Hildesheim I saw a gigantic rose tree, said to be five hundred years old, that almost hid the church tower it clambered over, and when I told our gardener, Allen, about it, he said: "Dear me, that's quite a novelty." Allen, like most old gardeners, was a character, but all I will say about him is that he constantly used a fine tense expression I have clung to all my life — the sort of expression you never hear in drawing-rooms — *making a job* of a thing. No weakening adjective; not a good job . . . just a *job*.

That summer, when not at Frimhurst or visiting Alice and Mary in the North, I of course spent all my time with the Garretts, and seeing that for nine months of the year I was in Germany, this pained my mother. They rented an old thatched cottage at Rustington of which they had made the most perfect of habitations, and the summer holidays and any odd days they could snatch from business were spent there. Rustington was then quite an unfrequented spot — a few straggling old cottages and farmhouses, a fine Norman church, sometimes flicked by spray when south-west gales blew, and an almost deserted beach.

I think I have never been happier in my life than there. An exhausting fight against the stream of prejudice, such as the Garretts had waged for many years, was not to be my portion till later; still we were all three hard-working women, and if circumstances are propitious no one can be more happily lazy than workers. Of course both cousins and all their friends were ardent Suffragists, and I wonder now at the patience with which they supported my total indif-

ference on the subject — an indifference I was to make up for thirty years later.

Their great friends the Parrys had a house close by, and besides helping me with invaluable musical criticism and advice Hubert Parry lent me a canoe, in which on very calm days, cautiously dressed in bathing costume, I put out to sea. There too I got to know the Fawcetts, and saw how that living monument of courage, the blind Postmaster-General, impressed the country people as he strode up and down the hills in the company of his wife. I thought Mrs. Fawcett rather cold, but an incident that happened the summer after the death of Rhoda, to whom she was devoted, taught me otherwise. One day when I was singing an Irish melody I had often sung at Rustington — “At the mid hour of night” — I suddenly noticed that tears were rolling down her cheeks, and presently she got up and quietly left the room. After that for many years I never saw her. Then came the acute Suffrage struggle, during which the gulf that separated Militants from National Unionists belched forth flames, but through all those years, remembering that incident, I always thought of Mrs. Fawcett with affection. . . .

The beach at Rustington is connected in my mind with one of the oddest manifestations of the tender passion I ever heard of. A certain man we knew, not a bachelor, was secretly beloved — only it wasn't quite a secret — by a maiden of gentle birth. The man, a strong swimmer, was in the habit of seeking out desolate places on the shore, depositing his garments in a bundle among the brushwood, and swimming out miles and miles to sea. One day when he returned he found a little bunch of flowers on the bundle and thought it was a joke of some passing stranger . . . but next day the same thing happened. Much perturbed, he varied his jumping-off place, but without success, for the hour of high tide is no secret and he was marked down by this infatuated maiden again and again. Just as I was leaving Rustington his much amused wife told us he talked of giving up bathing.

My mother's trips to Homburg had now become an annual necessity — the one welcome result in her eyes of her growing infirmities — but whoever took her there that year, I fear it was not I. Nina was out now, and Violet just emerging, and it became an institu-

tion that during Mother's absences from home, whether abroad or on visits to Alice and Mary, Aunt Judy should install herself at Frimhurst as chaperon. As I have said, the whole family adored her, and their affection was warmly reciprocated, but I fancy that finding herself once more within reach of Aldershot and the homage of the R.E.'s was the supreme delight of these visits.

Of course they flocked to see her, and there were many little expeditions to the camp — tea with old friends, or at the R.E. mess, regimental sports, and so on. Nothing if not feminine, Aunt Judy would often insist on her nervousness, but I always think it argued great courage on the part of an invalid to drive about the country in our carriages, for owing to rising prices my father's bargains in horse-flesh were becoming ever younger and less well-mannered, and our fantastic reputation for accidents was growing. Driving to balls in winter was really no joke, for two great belts of fog rising from the Canal and the Blackwater (of vegetable-marrow fame) lay across the road to almost anywhere, and at such spots Papa would spend the time head out of window, exhorting the coachman in Anglo-Indian phraseology to "keep on the track." And a legend had reached Aunt Judy in the far North that, ever hopeful, he had once continued these admonitions, with emphatic reinforcement, while the carriage was in the very act of slowly turning over into the ditch. But, fortunately for her, most of her chaperon visits took place in the summer when at least the fog danger was in abeyance.

I think she thoroughly enjoyed supervising her charges' little flirtations, and certainly took a touching interest in them as some of her letters to be given later will show.¹ At first I meant to eliminate where possible the poor spine, the feather bed, the wretched head, etc., etc., referred to elsewhere, but her literary style twines so gracefully among these unlovely themes, like dog-roses among old brambles, that I thought better of it. In a letter not appended there is trenchant allusion to my preoccupation with my new friends: "the General's portrait of Ethel flying hither and thither after successive deities of her imagination — tho' I regard these attachments as so much froth and foam on the top of a deep affection for her own people — is very vivid, and sounds anything but soothing to tired and sensitive nerves. However I suppose one must pay for bringing

¹ Appendix, p. 290, No. 2 *et seq.*

a pocket Niagara into the world! But she is not in the first uproar of youthful flightiness now and I do wish she were more considerate of you." I re-echo that wish with all my heart, but cannot help thinking that if dear Aunt Judy had herself been No. 1, as in days of yore, she might have been more lenient!

During the particular summer I am writing about she arrived as usual a few days before my mother's departure for the North, and learned that this time her flock was to include a certain Miss H. — one of Mother's treasures picked up in Homburg who was about to pay us her first visit, and whose dramatic arrival next day she had the luck to witness. A new cook being expected by the same train, the tax-cart had been sent to the station as well as the brougham, and in due course the horrified party assembled on the lawn saw the cart pull up at the front door with a stout person in it clad in bright blue velvet (it was a hot summer's day) and covered with chains and brooches. My mother rose and made at a relatively rapid pace for the porch, prepared to send this audacious lady back whence she came with a month's wages, but lo and behold! it was her new friend, who having asked for the Frimhurst conveyance, and finding only the tax-cart, had, like a sensible woman, got in, the groom taking her of course for the cook. As Papa was a magistrate, policemen were often about the place, and a handy constable, despatched at once to find out what had become of the brougham, returned in five minutes to report that a fly was in the canal with a lady inside.

The lady turned out to be the new cook; the lost brougham came home two or three hours later, and the very simple explanation of the whole affair was that our then coachman was yet another old soldier, and that between Frimhurst and the station there were no fewer than seven public-houses. . . . Miss H. informed us that the groom's face when bidden to take her to the front door was a study, and added that if we knew all she had learned about the family during that drive we should never hold up our heads again!

Before starting next day my mother had specially begged Aunt Judy to send an account of her impressions of the new guest, and the impressions were not favourable.² A cheery, bouncing Canadian, not in her first youth, she was the last person to appeal to Mrs. Ewing's taste, but the real rock of offence was a determined effort

² See p. 292.

to set up a flirtation with my father. As I have hinted, Aunt Judy herself was not averse to a little delicate flirting on her own lines; we all, even Mother, her great friend, used to smile to ourselves when, after washing her hair, she would appear in the drawing-room, cover the hearthrug with a towel, and with a charming "May I?" lie down flat on her back, spreading out her long pale-golden tresses fan-wise. But she was an old friend, and such tender little graces were soon put out of court by the extremely vigorous methods of the other. Papa's conduct under assault seems to have been blameless; indeed, the lady being neither young nor beautiful, I can well believe that though gratified he was more bored than anything else.

And now mark how even a very clever woman will put her foot into it sometimes. In an evil hour Aunt Judy thought it her duty to report these proceedings to the absent lady of the house; the result was manifest gratitude . . . tempered by so much secret resentment that from henceforth my mother's enthusiasm for her friend began to cool! And this is the explanation of a thing that had puzzled me — the rather sudden petering out of the correspondence.

APPENDIX III

[A]

From Elisabeth von Herzogenberg (Lisl)

(1)

Ober Döbling: June 12, 1878.

(*In German*) . . . What a queer desire . . . to want to hear "one more dream"! well, here it is. It was the day of your departure; you were starting first, not I, and had not come to say good-bye. I was surprised at this and went to the window to see if you were not coming . . . and then suddenly there was a big piece of water — the Channel I suppose — and I saw you on the boat. I stretched out my arms towards you, you did the same, and as I ran to the shore, I saw you making signs the result of which was that the ship came to land. But while we were saying good-bye it went off again, and you said you would catch it at the next landing-place. I feared for your heart and said: "Anyhow I will go with you all the way, Ethel," and we hurried along arm in arm. But I felt I couldn't keep it up and got frightened yet didn't want to forsake you, and both of us were in a state of strange distress and sadness; then all became misty till the deafening noise of a mill past which we were tearing woke me up. . . . How vividly I remember looking out of the window, seeing you standing there, and stretching out longing arms towards you! . . .

(2)

July 15, 1878.

(*In German*) . . . What you say about your multifarious occupations, including, it would seem, some literary undertaking or other, fills me with apprehension. It seems to me you have a specific duty towards your gift for music and should not let yourself be drawn away in other directions. If you were not in the growing stage I would say nothing; why should you not develop yourself in all directions and put forth as many shoots as you please? But talent is a destiny that imposes definite responsibilities . . . and one must wholly give oneself up to it when young if it is to bear good fruit. You know that as well as I, but your ambitions take you into side paths. I am

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absolutely against the one-sided education that turns people into machines — botanical, geographical, mathematical, or otherwise — and brushes aside all human considerations as not to the purpose. But in the case of a normal, healthily developed individual like yourself, who has eyes and ears for everything that merits attention, who has cultivated no one quality at the expense of the rest, who in a word is first a human being and then an artist, I do not think there is any danger of becoming one-sided — even though one's whole energy be focused by the burning glass of enthusiasm for the benefit of one specific talent, and a flame kindled that everything else must feed.

Ethel! you have not yet served your music for seven years, and you think its conquest easier than is really the case — that is to say, you don't think so really, but your quickly stirred nature responds to this and that call, and whatever you are doing at the moment seems to you of supreme importance . . . even lawn tennis! And then you become deaf, or won't listen, to the soft voice of what ought to be dearer to you than everything else! I was going to say all this before your last letter arrived, in which you confess that you are idle! . . . Oh, wicked, lazy bride, who does not deserve that the precious lamp should have been put into her hand unless she takes better care of it! . . . Ethel, beware lest it should be with you as with me. . . . I often could weep to think of the time I have lost, how badly I have husbanded my little talent. And now here I am — for all my artist's soul in the bonds of wretched dilettantism! If you knew what pain my conscience gives me, how it hurts as if it had an actual seat within like the heart one feels beating, you would do anything to avoid such a fate.

It is evident to me that the first step, difficult as it seemed, of winning your freedom, was nothing compared to what should follow — the daily working up of energy for a persistent diligence against which our weaknesses, big and little, are for ever in array! . . . Poor little Ethel, no one can understand your state of mind better than I, who am far more lazy by nature than you! And now, when I would give anything to work hard, it is too late! . . .

Tell me how you divide up your day, how much time remains for music when you have got through your literary work, your riding, your social distractions, your dinner parties, your lying about in the

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fields with Goethe under your arm. I cannot imagine how you can get in any real work, even a little counterpoint. I know that to work 3 *canti firmi* carefully takes me a lot of time, and besides that there is your piano practice to be done, your reading at sight, your studying, if possible, of scores, and your Variations to be written! . . . O Ethel how can the day be long enough for all this? and yet you long for more, cannot console yourself for renouncing your usual lawn-tennis triumphs, and are pining for balls! . . . *Ach Gott! Ach Gott!* what a demon of life possesses you! (*la cigale ayant chanté tout l'été*, etc.). . . . My beloved child, you asked for a sermon and now you've got one! And don't talk to me about your youth; you are far older than your years in many ways and in some respects have more wisdom than many a woman of 40 — therefore have no excuse.

. . . I am sorry the doctor you were all so attached to is dead, but glad that he is no longer there to allow you to dance! Ethel — how can one take such trivial things so seriously! Look at me; I too was young once and often thought how good it must be to abandon oneself, undeterred by other considerations, to the physical intoxication, the blood-stirring, cunningly-wrought rhythms of dancing. But as it so came that I was not allowed to dance I never made a hardship of it — and here are you in despair, at missing a few balls!! Oh! Oh! Oh! . . .

(3)

July 24, 1878.

(*In English*) . . . Letters are such poor things (though dear kind things) as one always says less or more than one means. You mustn't then take it too seriously when I wonder at your *passion* for physical amusements. I *can* quite understand it, though I never had a share in these pursuits, but what I couldn't help being troubled at was the importance you gave to half a year's sacrifice of these games, dancing, riding, etc. All you say about your being a doll filled with sawdust and all that is rubbish of course, as you very well know, and I won't have you blaspheme in that way; but what I clearly see is that you must have even more musical gift than I thought till now, as it could develop itself under so difficult circumstances. I always fear if you once give the devil of games your little finger, he'll take your whole hand without that you get conscious of it, and your physical nature

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will swallow your spiritual nature. . . . About the parties your mother likes you to go to, you could make her understand, surely, that you daren't lose your time (oh! what a precious thing is time!) in that shameful way idle people do. Say what you like, but have the energy without which talent comes to nothing. As Heinrich always says, talent is above all things a gift of character, and he is right. (*In German*) The other day when I gave him a very mitigated account of your proceedings he got quite sad and thoughtful, shaking his head and saying: "I don't know that our little Ethel will come to much if things go on like that." And he thinks so highly of you, my child! . . .

(4)

Arnoldstein, Villach.

August 14, 1878. (*In English*) My dearest Ethel, — I believe I left you rather long without news, but darling, only think that at Vilden I was with a sister — my only sister that I had not seen for two years! How much to recapitulate, how much discoveries to make, how much to look and hark at, how much honey to suck, how much to pat and kiss and what else! We went on chattering, though that is not the right word, the whole day and had a good time of it! and I have grown prouder than ever of this sister. O Ethel what a poor earthly, dusty creature I feel near her, yet this best of all women loves me and I feel as if this love could prevent me of growing wicked and help me even to get better. Darling, it's no use trying to make a picture of her; I could only enumerate certain qualities and particularities of her, and you best know how very far that kind of description is of a real characterisation. What I best would like to say of her is what Portia says of the star, when she goes home with Nerissa: "So shines a good deed in a naughty world." Darling, you know what we mean by "Einheit" — unity I suppose you call it — well, I never met a person whose personality had such a unity, such a perfume of perfect harmony. And then, what makes her so beautiful in my eyes, she has won "the peace that passeth all understanding," that we, you, my Ethel, and I, aim at; and this peace wraps everyone in its sweet shade that approaches her; it seems not so unattainable as you said in that letter of yours you felt it to be, so that I begin to hope it for myself and you. Ethel, I do feel quite incapable

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of describing this sister to you yet I should so much like to give you a "taste" of her, as I am quite superstitious in respect to her, and really do believe only a glimpse of her must work wonders. I wish you knew her, then you would see what a doll filled with sawdust I am compared to her; and though I hope you wouldn't leave of liking me you would *venerate* her.

Another pleasure I had in Vilden was Brahms. He lives on the other side of the lake and we spent an afternoon with him. (*In German*) I never saw him in kindlier mood; he showed us five new songs and a Motet he wrote in memory of poor von Holstein. He is sparing of words, this remarkable man, and often gives an impression of dryness; but every genuine experience of his turns into gold within. What exquisite emotion is once more enshrined in this piece, what ripeness in the contemplation of life and death! and at the same time the whole is expressed in terms of pure music. A real, joy-giving work of art. Henry privately copied it (a secret, mind! or else woe betide us!) and I know it nearly by heart; thus we carry it about with us, safely hidden in the deepest depths of our drawers and souls, and are so happy about it. Nothing is comparable to this delight in the fine work (*im schönen Wirken*) of others — this pure, calm, admiring contemplation of beauty, detached from all personal striving; nothing is more soothing, emancipating, beneficent;¹ and that my Heinrich can do this, can so utterly get rid of himself in such moments, is one among the many things that make his worth for me. There are so many who in their ardent hunger for their own development never achieve this quiet forgetfulness of self; how much they are to be pitied! . . .

I can imagine how it amuses you studying the *Liebeslieder* with those automatons; it must be like striking sparks from flint. . . . It's not that there are so many faults in your counterpoint, but it sounds so awkward and as if . . . it had rather bored you! You must first learn to find it amusing work!

(5)

September 29, 1878. (*In German*) . . . I look back upon this summer with so much happiness; being together with my splendid sister has left a warmth, a deep resonance in my soul that nothing can take

¹ *lösend, erlösend.*

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away; and the good time with my mother, combined with counterpoint, and watching the dear, gentle cows browsing among the green fields . . . what sympathetic memories!

Yesterday was the 10th anniversary of our wedding day; think how old we are, 10 years married, and thank God as full of joy in each other as we ever were! It is strange after such a lapse of time to feel so young, as though on the brink of life in which one has already swum so far. Many things have come differently to what I hoped for; even when I was engaged my fondest dream was . . . children. I remember once in those days taking a child on to my lap with a strange feeling of emotion, and when Heinrich petted it I thought to myself how well it would be with me some day. But it was not to be, and I have learned that the happy have plenty of spare strength which they can and ought to devote to renouncing cheerfully even that which is best and most beautiful. . . .

(6)

Dresden: March 1879.
(*In English*) . . . I know you oh! so well now, and I have the feeling as if your coming life was spread before my eyes — not in its details of course, but in its colour, its key, and as if I saw a deep sunshine and a calm, serene atmosphere reposing on it. Bless you my child. . . . (*In German*) Yes, the doctor does give hope; after a short easy cure next summer all may yet come true! I thank you for sharing this time with me, this longing to call a child my very own. Till that happens, and for my part I dare no longer hope, tell yourself that this much you have done for me — wakened in me a mother's tenderness such as I never felt before in this world except in dreams. During those bad days, when it was given to me to comfort you and hold you to my heart and dry your tears, the moment was both sad and happy, for I thought to myself: What must it be if *that* lot should be mine, the one I long for! Yet how good is this, and how I love this other child of mine! . . .

(7)

Dresden: March 1879.
(*In German*) . . . O my child, cheer up about it all; you repented, and God, the kind God of Love, asks no more of us! . . .

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In the train I read *Adam Bede* (but for that the thought of your trouble would have worried me all day) and I was in a good mood for appreciating its beauties — that fine fellow Adam, and the harmony in Dinah that cannot but take hold of one even though she speaks another language than ours, and deals in conceptions that have not our sympathy. How beautiful harmony is, no matter from what source it springs! . . . Once more, do not trouble your head about all that past business. My child, in this burning love for what we think good and right let us remain deeply linked together, as in other things, for ever and ever. I will always warn you if I think you need it, and if you see me falter or fail you must help me. And if that is not a lasting bond I don't know what is. . . .

(8)

May 25, 1879. (*In German*) I feel sometimes as if the happiness bestowed on me were almost too great, as if I were spoiled by Fate; and yet when I see Julia, to whom a second child will so soon be born, I stretch out my arms for more happiness, have visions of that which I long for as if it had already belonged to me, and must come back again. But I do not feel it as a *pain*, my darling, or only sometimes; generally I even enjoy the faculty of comprehending the joys I know not, and find compensation for what is denied me in this intense realization of what I miss. . . . How I thank you for calling me Mother; do you know you have helped me, for since I have you I bear it more easily having no child of my own. Thank God that there is such a thing as love on this earth — now don't add this time "*and hunting*"! . . . Good-bye *liebstes Weibliches* (*untranslatable; means "the one I love best of the female sex"*) — whose name is written deep down in my heart close to Heinrich's! . . .

(9)

Graz: June 14, 1879. (*In German*) . . . I cannot understand why you should wish X to be *fond* of you; if one is really loved by the people that matter how can one care two straws what others, however admirable and interesting, feel for one? . . . I fear it is love of conquest! Beware, Ethel, of that trait in you. And if you are so bent on conquest, why not put your energy into conquering your

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little weaknesses, and when you have to do without what you want, accept the fact with a cheerful countenance? . . . I cannot understand you in this whole affair, for "understanding" means, surely, that one would feel or act similarly under the circumstances — and that I cannot achieve. (*In English*) O my child . . . this tendency of yours to be influenced by what is *nearest!* . . . and I see so many pencils stretched out to write upon the blank pages of that book so dear to me called Ethel! . . . Keep fast to me, near me, in spite of them; I can never let hold of you!

(10)

Graz: September 21, 1879. (*In German*) . . . What you find "amusing" in the butterfly you describe, however charming, I cannot understand. Don't you see how unpleasant it is, this playing with feelings that ought to be taken seriously . . . (or possibly working oneself up into imaginary states of mind) all this misuse of good energy, of fine words, of the gentle physical expressions we call caresses? . . . One would imagine these things ought to be used sparingly; is one to find it "amusing" if they are carelessly, and perhaps worse than carelessly expended?

(11)

September 24. (*In German*) . . . I wonder how you would like Julia. What you think me so rich in, instincts, she does not possess at all. In a certain sense she is lifted high above the region where children of nature have certain things in common. For instance her feeling for the baby is . . . prophetic chiefly! her eye rests upon it with most affection when she has just been looking at its 5-year-old little sister, because she is saying to herself "it will be like that some day." The sense of deep belonging-together with the new-born child, of unconscious tenderness, the joy of feeling this little being dependent on one, all this is nothing to her; she puts it on one side in a manner not given to me. But in other directions she has acquired a freedom in loving, suffering, and understanding, before which I bow down in shame. And what a heavenly absence of egotism! you never hear her speak of herself, and every one who talks to her is persuaded of his own exquisite importance though she never uses the conventional methods of the world. But this ex-

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penditure of kindness and sympathy fatigues her, and she flies the company of others rather than seeks it. Both of them wish to live for themselves and the family only, and when they do associate with other people, it never gets beyond intellectual relations. They are kind — sympathize and awaken sympathy — but never embark on an intimacy that might fetter. What they demand above all things is . . . freedom. Intercourse with others makes Harry positively ill, but no one who has any dealings with him imagines that *he* could possibly be that person! . . .

We have had trouble about the baby; the wet-nurse, such a nice little “mare,” lost her milk and had to go. O Ethel, she flung her arms round my neck sobbing, poor little thing, and when the substitute came hung over the cradle crying; she loved that child, and had forgotten her own over it; and that is the detestable part of this wet-nurse business. . . .

(12)

Dresden.

September 25, 1879. (*In English*) . . . What I wonder at is to hear you always judging my standard as higher than yours, and to see you still sticking to yours. In that respect, then, you have no ambition, for else how could you bear the thought of having a smaller and poorer view of some of the most important things of life? Your sister’s judgment may be more sensible, founded as it is on what she thinks you are, than mine, which is only founded on hopes. (*In German*) But if the least alive thing in nature, crystal, can bud with new crystals, why should not the most alive thing, the human being, suffer change, and suddenly — or gradually — see things in a new light? Has such a thing never happened, and may I not cling to such a possibility to quiet and comfort myself? Have you never noticed that in people otherwise thoroughly cultivated there is sometimes one spot in heart or brain that seems untilled, where nothing, or only weeds, grow? And hard by are exquisite flowers. Do you remember, once when we were speaking of marriage, I made some such remark about you? “You have yet to learn to *feel* on this subject,” I said, more or less; “these views you are expressing are not real living ones, they are the superficial result of experiences you think you have made. You don’t feel the coarseness

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(*das Rohe*) of what you say on these topics, because it isn't a question of your feeling anything at all; you are merely constructing, putting this and that together." And I would say the same thing to you today, when I find myself obliged once more to go over ground I thought we had left behind us for good and all! Ethel! like Penelope I will never weary of re-doing the stitches so sadly unpicked; I will always hope and believe that you can never fall short of the only way of looking at life that appears to me thinkable for a being like you.

*"Möge Jeder still beglückt
Seiner Freude warten;
Wenn die Rose selbst sich schmückt
Schmückt sie auch den Garten."*²

This childish verse is full of the deepest wisdom.

The expression "Plan of Life" exactly marks the difference between us. You are full of plans of a most decided character; I never have any, and it has always appeared to me that one should have none, that all one should try for is to develop one's powers to the full . . . to make all one can of oneself, to "adorn" oneself in the noblest sense of the word. I want to see you less preoccupied with the future, less hungering after fruit that has yet to ripen, more lovingly immersed in the beautiful, rich present hour that is yours. . . . Greet your sister. Would that she held me in less high estimation but backed me up better! What a quantity of things yet to be done! . . . what a quantity of things you always have yet to do! I wonder, and I say it without irony, how in the midst of such a turmoil you can keep the power of listening to the still small voice and catching its delicate vibrations. Strange how much you experience — I how little! and yet it seems to me I have a rich, rich life. . . . Good-bye my child, on the 30th we will hold high festival.

(13)

October 9, 1879. (*In German*) . . . How can you think I wanted you to take pains to fall in love with someone! Nothing is farther from my wishes, and that you have no inclination in this direction

² "Calmly and contentedly let each await his joy; in adorning herself the rose adorns the garden."

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troubles me not at all; on the contrary I look upon it as a healthy trait compared to the sentimentally-expectant state of mind of our German girls. But that you should nevertheless think of *marriage* is more than I can understand — and there was a time when you were happy at feeling that marriage on such lines would be impossible to you. How proud I was of that victory! — now it is all over and done for! That you say things out so honestly and call them by their names I love in you, but I fancy you are wrong in thinking that what one might almost call this mapped-out, all-round ambition of yours is usual and normal. To be able to follow one's instincts, unhampered by trammels of any kind, is a happiness so rare and exquisite that I, who had neither the energy to fight for my own freedom nor the possibility of putting that sort of thing through, could often envy you. But this field of ambition — a legitimate one since it is a question of real power, which is inseparable from ambition in a certain sense — is not enough for you, and here you are, thinking of adopting a Plan of Life that shall enable you to satisfy countless other ambitions on other fields! It is this insatiability that alarms me so and that I can't go with. Surely it is worth while pausing and asking yourself whether it would not be wiser to curb this tendency, instead of merely registering that you are thus fashioned. Ethel, you say I must not forget in associating with you that we are different, that what satisfies me would not satisfy you — or rather, as you yourself modestly put it, that you are "not good enough for what would make me happy." I recognize the difference of our natures so clearly that I don't really want you to marry at all, believing you to be one of those natures that require no completing, that need not lose themselves in another in order to find themselves; what is more, you are strong enough to stand alone and have a right to say you intend to mount guard over your own development and live for yourself. Thus marriage seems to me no necessity in your case, but before I would allow that nevertheless you ought to marry, as a matter of fact merely because you haven't enough money, I should have to give up my best faith in you, and I can't do that yet awhile! . . .

One last word I must say. You are cleverer than I in many ways, but I have one advantage over you — that I have been in existence 11 years longer, and have looked on at life for 11 more years than

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you. And this experience I have made in myself; that as you grow older the number of things which impress you, which you know in the depths of your heart to be worth striving after, grows less and less; and that on the other hand the passion and respect for what has retained its value increases. This experience I shall see you making some day! . . . I believe it, because I desire it. . . . (*In English*) Trust me, trust me, my child; I can but love you better every day that good love becomes older; when I speak the hardest I feel the softest, believe me, and am fondest of you when I scold you! . . .

(14)

December 30, 1879. (*In English*) . . . There you are, perfectly happy in the house of the excellent Fiedlers who carried you off after knowing you just 3 days! and though I am pleased I marvel again how that all rushed so quickly upon you, you little steamboat. What a talent to make friends you have, and to jump into relations which to assimilate myself to I should want months! I didn't tell it you yesterday because really it is too childish, but I do feel jealous about the gladness and comfort you have in that house and which I can give you, things being as they are, so rarely in that opulent form which is so becoming to your health, my poor child! I seldom envy rich people but I do envy Fiedlers in this case . . . and I had nothing to give my child but my poor love — *no*, my rich, rich love — and a little sadness to accompany it! I would like to have you near me, telling me that you feel happiest of all with

Your old Mother.

You made I suppose the acquaintance of that nasty S—; I wonder how he pleased you. Can you understand that Joachims allow such a man to be intimate with them? What a pity that dear Joachim is so weak, so feeble! . . .

(15)

January 6, 1880. (*In English*) . . . O darling, if I could only make you understand that I do not grudge you the affection you feel for that kind Mary Fiedler and her for you; if it seemed so, make those "damned" letters responsible for it, please! only that for one like me, faithful and heavy to a perhaps exaggerated degree, who al-

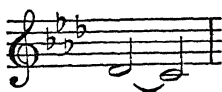
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ways had difficulty of giving a newcomer the place in her heart that was held by an old friend, it seems hard to see *the* friend, the most cherished of all, so easy in giving and accepting affection, and apparently always craving for more — for only where a need is does its satisfaction come so very easily. . . .

(16)

February 4, 1880. (In English) . . . Of course I forgive you my child. I know that in the same moment you do or speak wrong, the repentance springs up in your heart, so how could I not forgive? But I wish, I wish you could learn to subdue your rather wild nature so that the good and mild sides would not come out only at second thoughts! . . . The things I went through yesterday were hard to bear and I am wearied and sore of heart. If Henry were not such an angel what a poor creature I would feel; he is my blessing and my rest. My poor mother is in such a state of irritation, full of the old torturing King Lear feelings; she thinks herself loved less than formerly, and this is mixed up with so much old suppressed sorrow that one must have the greatest pity and forbearance. When she is as she is now she cannot support the sight of other people intimate with us — can't realise and understand it. That's why I ask you not to come, darling, till perhaps Monday. . . .

(Evening) It will comfort you to hear things go better now; poor old King Lear is quieted again, and feels she tortured herself unnecessarily; still, as I know her too well, I still think it better not to come before Monday, my poor little one! The pity I felt for her yesterday and to-day is indescribable. Many things in her biography help to explain what else would nearly seem symptoms of madness, so utterly beside herself can she get. . . . I suffered tortures!



Oh . . . !³

(17)

March 1880. (In German) . . . My father goes away tomorrow . . . he is too old to educate, and as I can't force him to be nicer

³ The groan in Brahms's Ballad *Eduard*.

Impressions that Remained

to you, and also think it more dignified in you not to expose yourself to his unfriendliness, don't come till the evening, darling. Besides which he is here for such a short time that I ought to devote myself entirely to him. If I hold back and am different to you under such circumstances, can I possibly help it? Come at 7! such a good meal will I give you! (*in English*) and bring your violin, and we'll make a good fight against all the blue devils of this world. Come into the garden, maid — come into my parlour and right into my heart, where there is love enough, if that can help. Come and be welcome to a little nice ham, and omelette, and a new volume of Bach, and an old

LISL.

(18)

Würzburg: March 1880.

(*In English*) . . . If you knew how it distressed me once more to see my old mother unkind, unjust and unreasoning, just with *you*, my Ethel, of all people in the world, and to go off on this journey with her was no comfort just then! We slept in the train, but once I work up in terror, as I feared I had shrieked "Ethel" in a horrible dream in which, entering our little dining room, I saw my mother and you on two chairs, she almost swooning and you bathed in tears! But as so often happens it was only my heart that had shrieked. I feel it working away at every new little shock and hope I shall have quiet and peace here. . . . [N.B. — *She was at Würzburg, consulting an obstetrician.*] It is curious to think of this everlasting battle with sterile Nature, trying with art and cunning to force from her what she will not give of her own free will — she who is otherwise such a spendthrift! My old mother wishes me good as hard as she can; if she could give me a child in bringing it into the world herself, I think, old and worn as she is, that would do it. Yet I never can open my heart to her, never tell her how I yearn for a baby. I shrink to speak of all that with her, which is an ingratitude, but we differ too much in our way of naming and feeling and "taxing" things. If I lived with her I should be lonely, yet I love her and thus I suffer. . . . Go and see after my lonely husband! Thursday I have thee again my darling. . . .

(*Later.*) The doctor was there, says I can be helped, and I come back in the spring. My heart is light; I learn to hope again! . . .

(19)

Verona: April 10, 1880.

(*In German*) . . . I won't dwell longer on this wonderful place lest I sadden you, poor little Tannhäuser! But listen my child; to-day I said and swore to myself that you *shall* see it all! we will not always dissuade you from letting your thirsty eyes and soul drink in all this beauty; and believe me, one loses nothing by waiting; on the contrary one is storing up receptivity.

My child, I am so thankful, so grateful that things are as they are between us, and at the thought that nothing can ever change this wonderful sense of belonging together. Well for us that we have each other! Though you sometimes distress me, and I you, down in the depths the essential is so safe, so real — and like all real things can never pass away. . . . (*Later.*) Your second letter has just come; Ethel! as if you do not always belong to me wherever I may happen to be! — you, who have so great a part in me — you, my child, my friend, my comrade! . . .

(20)

Florence, April 17, 1880. (*In German*) . . . I met Frau Hildebrand today at Julia's. Nothing is less favourable for purposes of observation than being surrounded by members of your own family — old friends of the person in question — while you yourself have known and been known by that person in effigy for ever so long. Animals when first they meet sniff each other a little and at once find out all that is necessary; we humans put out cautious feelers, think this and fancy that to ourselves, and are no wiser than before. When I say "we" I except you, little seven-league-booted one, but now don't go and imagine I say this in wicked irony — I who talk about you to Julia at her special request nearly all day! Send your Cello Sonata quick, quick; she wants to hear something of yours. . . .

(21)

Florence: April 20, 1880.

(*In English*) . . . Your last letter made me sad, not only because of your seediness, but because of your depression, so different from

Impressions that Remained

what I hoped and believed. (*In German*) My child, what has become of the calm, steady mood of your first letters, the sense that we are together though separated, the all-round steadfastness? Is what is best and strongest in you to take the form of words only? am I to wait for ever for the pedal-point — “the note that sounds so softly, but can always be heard by those who listen for it in secret”? Is it always to be thus with you: “revelling high as heaven, saddened unto death”? From one year to another I look to see you getting older, but, O wild little stag, the horns I keep hoping you have rubbed off once for all grow again and again, and vainly I seek for traces of the true wisdom you have so much platonic affection for! . . . My mother, so Julia says, regrets her Leipzig aberrations and puts it down to the fragmentary, idle life she leads when with us. She is very dear and kind to me, but we never refer to that time — it is best not to. . . .

(22)

Florence, May 2, 1880. (*In German*) . . . Hildebrand is doing a profile relief of me which takes up a lot of my time, but of course I am delighted and as proud as a peacock. The best part of it, however, is the intercourse with the delightful man himself. What with great cleverness and fineness, simple direct manners, and natural charm of intelligence, he is one of the most attractive of men. As for her, one can sum it up thus: that though she is a *dilettante* in many ways I imagine her a great artist in loving. . . . X has sent me a horrible sketch of you; it was kindly meant, and touched me greatly, but . . . God in His wrath made him take to drawing! By the by if you see my fat brother in Dresden don't let him know how often I write to you; the poor fellow is a martyr to jealousy. Tell me if you like his boy . . . and the rest of the family. . . .

I am thankful when there is a day of rest at home; not that we see so very much, but that little is too much for me; I get tired of enjoying when I only feel and don't understand. But I am making progress in an amateurish way and getting to know whether I am really admiring a thing myself or merely standing before something admirable; if the latter I steal away quickly. . . . Of all this, however, you, extraordinary being that you are, forbid me to speak, but it is permitted I hope to mention Hildebrand's new group, for

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whenever I think of it a sort of shining joy floods my soul. You know how I have always admired his work, especially the Sleeping Shepherd-Boy, but this group fills one with the sort of religious reverence that only perfect works of art inspire. You have no idea of the beauty of the young Bacchus — the languid perfection of the body, supported by a comfortable-looking, not at all revolting old Satyr — beauty that makes one think of one's best possessions, the C Major Symphony of Mozart for instance. Surely Hildebrand must soon win round his last opponents; can anyone dare to go on picking holes after this, or deny that here is an irresistible art-force before which one must do homage — in a word, a master? . . .

Please construct for me a suitable message to Frau —; I can't think of one myself but you'll hit on something . . . (it's quite a speciality of yours). . . . I am glad I did not come to Italy sooner; that much one may say, mayn't one, without raising a storm? . . .

(23)

Berchtesgaden: July 30, 1880.

(*In German*) . . . We are having a difficult time with poor M—, and perhaps being with us is not what I hoped it would be for her. I had fancied that seeing people as absolutely happy as we two are with our work, our beloved music, might show her that this way lies salvation for stricken souls such as hers; but now I wonder whether on the contrary the spectacle does not depress her, for her talent is a poor bird with crippled wings that has forgotten how to sing, and I sometimes fear will never learn it again. The few hours I have to myself I ravenously devote to Bach's Choral Preludes; and sometimes, when the unutterable peace comes over me that the contemplation of beauty, the losing oneself in the soul of an artist like Bach, brings with it, I am almost frightened to think in what vast measure this highest of all joys has been given me compared to poor M— thirsting in the desert! My life is so strangely happy that I even question whether I have the right to help one so unhappy — whether I can call forth in myself what is necessary to the comprehension of so much suffering. Often and often I feel thus when with M—. There is the whistle of the train that brings Brahms and Frau Schumann . . . good-bye!

Impressions that Remained

(24)

September 22, 1880. . . . After untold suffering L— brought her baby into the world . . . to see it die at once! How terrible that must be, Ethel, and yet . . . I still long and long — nevertheless!

[B]

From Myself to My Mother

(1)

Salomonstr.: October 19, 1878.
. . . On Thursday (the next Gewandhaus concert) *such* an event takes place — the 50th anniversary of the day Frau Schumann made her debüt (as a child of 8) in the Gewandhaus! She is going to play nothing but his things of course, and it will be very glorious. The whole place is to be decorated, the floor one mass of flowers, etc. She, poor woman, is naturally in an awful state of mind about it, wrote such a touching letter to Frau v. Herzogenberg saying: "You understand how painful it will be on such an occasion as this to be the object of general attention"!! After this is a party, at Frau Frege's, where she, Joachim and his wife, perhaps Brahms, Madame Schwabe and others will be. I am looking forward to it much and wonder if Frau Schumann will remember me, though on such a night I shall of course not put myself forward in any way. For Frau Schumann's sake I shall be heartily glad when it is all over — if she can bear it is very doubtful — and do think it's cruelty to animals, and yet one couldn't do less. . . .

From Same to Same

(2)

October, 1878.
. . . This has been a great week on account of the Frau Schumann festival. It went off most gloriously. The woman surely never played as she did last Wednesday at the rehearsal, and above all last Thursday in the concert. Thanks to the death of the Concertmeister's wife's uncle, I got a ticket just under the piano. The Saal was beautifully decorated, with trophies, and all round the room laurel wreaths with 1828–1878 therein, really very pretty. One most suc-

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cessful idea was selling little bouquets on the stairs, to be thrown at Frau S. as soon as she appeared. When she entered, from every corner of the room showered flowers. She did not in the least expect it; whichever way she looked she was smothered in them. I never saw anyone look so delighted in my life; round about the piano they lay a foot thick and she and Reinecke really had to dig a pathway and a clear space round the stool. She played too exquisitely, such fire and pathos, and looked so beautiful at the same time in dark red velvet with a long satin train. The two Miss Schumann's sat behind me and remembered me very well. I was so pleased and then — great moment — just as the symphony was beginning, in came Frau S. from the artists' room and sat next to me!! I was too shy to remind her of my own existence just then, but love to think I sat near her on that great night. After the concert Lisl came down to meet me in the Saal (she had sat in the gallery) and fairly took my breath away with her loveliness. I had never seen her really "dressed up" before, and simply say I never saw anything like her in my life. She was in dark red striped velvet and satin with (*pro tem.*) an ermine tippet round her neck; her hair seemed *strahlend* ⁴ and she wore a slender wreath of some flower — single-leaved, white and striped with dark red; in German they are called *Vatermörder*!! ⁵ Such a painful piece of Teutonic realism. I wore my light green, and created, as you may imagine — at least the dress did — a tremendous sensation at Frau Frege's, whither a happy few repaired. Frau Schumann is staying there, and soon after we arrived she appeared, radiant. The love she bears for the happy Lisl is so touching. What is it in Lisl that none can resist, old, young, rich or poor? The old nurse who nursed me during my illness seemed to love *die gnädige Frau* much in the way Frau Schumann loves her! Late in the evening when most of the guests had retired I went up to dear Frau Schumann and had a blissful conversation with her. I don't fancy she much remembered me at first, though she was so sweet and kind, but when I, knowing Lisl had told her of me, said I was Ethel Smyth she brightened all over and said: "*Ich gratulire! da sind Sie in gute Hände gekommen.*" ⁶ At this minute up came Lisl and put

⁴ Giving out light.

⁵ Parricides.

⁶ "I congratulate you! You have got into good hands."

Impressions that Remained

her arm round me and said, "*Dieses ist mein Pflegekind!*" ⁷ Frau S. said, "*Wir waren Nachbarn im Concert aber da wollten Sie gar nichts von mir wissen.*" Lisl said, "*Sagen Sie dass ja nicht! Ethel war viel zu bescheiden Sie dort anzusprechen.*" ⁸ Frau S. was so dear, said she hoped she would see me again, and I kissed her hand, feeling rather like the page-boy in *Rothraut* — "*Ihr tausend Blätter im Walde wisst ich habe schön Rothraut's Mund geküsst!*" ⁹ When Brahms comes in January I hope to see more of that grand woman. I do envy Lisl her love — no I don't! One can't envy Lisl anything, she deserves all the love a mortal can give her. . . .

From Myself to My Father

(3)

April, 1879.

. . . I still have two more of my Xmas-present rides before me, and during the last I obtained an insight into German notions of sport I shall never forget. I rode as usual with my two cavaliers (this is proper in Germany!) to the race-course, which is a great open grassy place about as big as the parade ground in front of Colonel Cooke's house, the course being round it, and not very plentifully bestrewed with fences that even the keen filly would walk over. I noticed a small concourse of horsemen in elaborate get-ups (or gets-up!) at one side, and a hare quietly cropping the grass in the distance. In fearful excitement this object is pointed out to me by the gentlemen with, "There is a hunt to-day!" I also was much excited though I didn't quite see how it was going to be managed. "Where are the hounds?" I ask. They stare at me in blank astonishment and proceed to explain that there are none, and eventually I gather that two tame hares are kept on the premises and let out about once a week; the sport is that one of the riders shall ride after the hare, halloing and cracking a long driving whip. The hare of course moves slowly on, and the object is for the other riders to tear about

⁷ "This is my adopted child."

⁸ "We were neighbours in the concert, but she wouldn't have anything to do with me!" — "Don't say that! Ethel was far too modest to speak to you *there*."

⁹ "The thousand leaves in the forest know I have kissed beautiful Rothraut's mouth!"

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preventing her from getting off the grass plot into the woods at the side!!!! "If she does get into the woods," say I, "what then?" "O then we go home, and towards evening she comes back and of her own accord goes into her hutch where she is shut up again." Did you ever hear of anything so absurd? I laughed till I nearly fell from my steed and my cavaliers were rather hurt in their feelings! However, it is possible, though not probable, that if one had never known the other thing this sort of "sport" might be entertaining. . . .

[C]

*From Juliana Horatia Ewing (Aunt Judy)
to My Mother*

(1)

Exeter: May 7, 1879.

My dear Mrs. Smyth, — I got here very successfully, having had a good deal in the way of travelling companions — a large party of Churchills and then a Colonel Cardew who was amazingly chatty both about the war and agriculture, and temperance v. teetotalism, and the good results of giving tea and coffee to his haymakers, and money instead of cider. He was followed by a nurse and baby, and by Baby's Mamma and Aunt, who mopped and mowed before it as if it were Mumbo Jumbo.

That one day was lovely, but to-day it is as cold and cheerless as ever. Mind you take care of yourself, and get change of air and exercise — "carriage exercise" in the *close* carriage! It is not fit for you to play any tricks. I must say I was struck with your needing care and told the girls so, as they will probably tell you. It is by *little cossetings* (each of which alone might be done without, but the sum of which does what no medicine can) that health slowly returns after severe illness. Jenner once said to me: "Try and think of your own health for the next seven months, will you?" and sometimes it is the least selfish plan one can pursue; for it *is* an effort (especially in a large family where everybody else is in normal health) to trouble for what one knows would do one good. One feels inclined to crawl into a hole and stop there. But one can't recover by that process.

Impressions that Remained

I got a bright chatty letter from Captain Patten with some most flattering accounts of the P.M.O. in Cyprus shedding tears over "Jan of the Windmill"; a very nice pat of butter. I hope to enclose your Pot-Pourri receipt to-day; I haven't yet got at anything for Ethel except Col. Durnford's pamphlet on Iswandala, but I don't think she would care for it. I think I must send her a letter I got from Mrs. Durnford with some facts.

Dear Mrs. Smyth, I do not know how to thank you and the General and your children for the home you give me at Frimhurst. I am not ungrateful, only "unaccustomed to public speaking" in the giving of thanks! It has added a great pleasure to the visit to see your young ones growing up nicer and nicer. I do like your children . . . I am reduced to the classic language of the day . . . *awfully!* Give them my best love, and all that is proper to send to the General.

Yours very affectionately,

J. H. EWING

(2)

[NOTE. — *This was one of the letters written when the writer was acting as chaperon. All the people mentioned in it were in, or connected with, the R.E., and the young men either were, or were supposed to be, admirers of my sister Nina. "Rex," i.e. Mr. Ewing, had been posted to Ceylon, and though he and Aunt Judy were very fond of each other, he did not in the least desire the presence of an invalid wife in that far-off spot, nor had she the faintest wish to leave England.*]

Frimhurst, May 5, 1881.

Dearest Mrs. Smyth, — Thank you very much for your kind message. I did not at all like going without seeing you, but I wanted to catch Mrs. Jelf who is only to be quite a short time in England, and this was taking me up to town on the 11th. But your hospitable and kind General, who had most amiably pressed me to stay on a bit before your letter came, has smoothed out my plans by allowing me to ask Mrs. Jelf to come down here and see me for a couple of nights.

Now I must report on *my nieces!* Don't you think I must feel like a hen with a brood of adventurous ducklings when they offer me tandem-drives and saloon-pistol practice? That is chaff. They are

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very good indeed, and I even induced Violet to take care of her cold which was rather bad but is now pretty well gone.

Now I must tell you that Mr. Hippisley¹⁰ had to go away on duty, so Mr. Foster came and brought Mr. Godsell, which deprived me of my little confidential chat with Mr. Hippisley. The General was in town that day but he left me with permission to ask Mr. Foster to dinner (!). Mr. F. could not stay however. But he invited me to tea with him to see the alterations in the R.E. mess and the honorable place they have given to the pictures Rex and I presented the Mess with . . . but with such an appealing glance of those fine eyes of his towards the young ladies that I accepted *for the party*, on condition that the General would consent and let us have the carriage. I can hardly help laughing to think how guilty I looked and how shaky I felt when I petitioned the General on his return, but he gave consent at once.

I must tell you, for you will be amused, that I am sure the General suspects that you and I are in *mysterious* correspondence!! He has made several leading remarks, but I have kept your counsel inviolate; still I think he and I have now a *tacit* understanding. *Par exemple*, he has planned a little dinner party for me (by your wish I believe) and when we had confabbed about the married guests and the dinner, he proceeded to the question of bachelor guests and suggested Mr. St. Lawrence. I agreed and with a most guileless countenance, I trust, suggested Mr. Foster. To which the General replied, "No! we mustn't have the Rivals together!"

(*Saturday.*) I could not go on with this yesterday, my spine and head were so troublesome all day. At one time I feared we should have to give up our expedition, but a dose of Sal Volatile and Soda water got the worst edge off my headache, and with air cushions and a hot bottle (!) I got through very well, and enjoyed it very much. The air here now is something divine and feels like tonic and balm in one.

Well. We drove to the familiar I Lines and Mr. Foster came out to meet us followed by Mr. Godsell and they took us over the new mess improvements and showed us our pictures in places of high honour; and told us, to my keen delight that they had just expelled the *World* by vote from the mess, and showed us all the things that

¹⁰ Later on he married my sister Violet.

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have been presented since I was there. Then we adjourned to Mr. Foster's rooms and had tea, and I must say his surroundings confirm my impressions about him. A very choice little collection of books and such nice pictures, and most beautiful eastern curios in the brass and pottery and carpet line. Violet (though she was not the right one!) exploded when he left us into: "There is a man with something in him!" and it is very true. There is a pretty water-colour of his father's place over his bed, but I came no nearer to any of the practical information you are wisely desirous to get. But I may soon for — wasn't it an odd and delightful accident? — Mrs. Jelf was in the Camp and Mr. Godsell brought her in to see me! It seemed so odd that we should meet again for the first time in an R.E. hut, in the old Lines we both loved so well. . . .

Now about our little dinner to-night. Mr. St. Lawrence could not come. So the General put it to popular vote at table whom we should ask instead, and we all looked at opposite points of the compass and voted for Mr. Foster, as if he were a perfectly new and original inspiration!! I am sorry Mr. St. Lawrence could not come. Of course he does not attract *me* so much as the scholarly and artistic qualities of Mr. Foster do, but I liked what I saw of him the other day. I haven't a notion which Nina prefers, and as I think nothing is so offensive as chaff where there is any possibility of a serious sentiment, I need hardly say that we discuss them quite in the abstract. She complains that Mr. St. L. is so ugly, which I don't agree to, but as she seems to feel personally aggrieved that Fate has not endowed him with eagle's eyes like Mr. F. that rather scores to his account!!

Now I think I have told you all about "the Rivals"! By the by I did not answer your question as to how I liked the lady I found here. To give you a quite straight answer I was *not* prepossessed in her favour. It is indeed a sad story, and I do not wonder your pity bubbled over into kindness; but as you ask me, I'll tell you frankly that the impression she produces on me is that of a person who might become embarrassing, and even mischievous. (I know you have asked for my critical opinion for what it is worth! I hope you know I should not be uncharitable enough to express it without being asked.) Her latest *billet doux* was to Nina, saying, "I *must* call you Nina." Nina asked me what I thought, and I hope

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you won't think I was wrong in counselling her to answer the note courteously but shortly, and to take no notice of the suggestion, which I think a little impertinent. My feeling is that if she presumed with *you*, you could put her down quite effectually, but that the young things might feel it a nuisance to be involved in terms of intimacy, which there seems to be no special reason for setting up.

Don't you always feel the Academy rather a test of acquaintances? I do not quite like the mental picture of your dear Nina being "hailed" by her Xtian name in the Academy by Miss H., with possibly a body-guard of the cavaliers whom she seems to have presented her London address to as freely as Mrs. Tupper presented her *cartes de visite*! Don't think I am prudish about any little independent and Canadian ways she may have. Details of etiquette vary infinitely and she is not a child; but unless one's instincts deceive one her mind is not of that *bona fides*, pure, and honest cast which does lift some noble if eccentric individuals as much above the Law as St. Paul. I think my feeling is that if one has ties of duty or sentiment to a person of her type, one stands by them in spite of little ways one may not like; in Jeremy Taylor's delightful way of putting things in his prayers: "My friends and *my father's friends* let me never ungratefully despise or neglect") — but when there is no tie, I always feel it wise to think *how one would like a person in London!* . . . and I don't fancy her with your chicks in London.

What an unmitigated brute I do feel to sit here enjoying your hospitality, and backbite a young lady who wants to be intimate with you! And you know I may be quite wrong. But my impression is that she lacks the two great elements of qualification for satisfactory friendship — *genuineness* and *mental delicacy*. . . . (Don't let me in for a libel case!!)

My back aches so I must stop. It is the sweetest day to-day, and this place does look so lovely. Every breath one draws is a delight. Certainly if it is a torment to be so constitutionally, hopelessly, neuralgically, barometrically susceptible to climatic influences when they are against one, it is an extra sense to revel in heather breezes and pine odours and dry air, and feel the pains in one's bones, as old women say, vanish like bad dreams.

Tell Alice her father's solicitude breaks out every morning with: "Well. I quite expect we shall hear some news of an arrival in Edin-

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burgh to-day." He has said this for days past, and we all look a *little* embarrassed and very hopeful!

By the bye I have not said a word of our two sad departures this week. We groan daily! Bob must have great individuality, one does miss him so. It is so unnatural not to see him warming his hands at the drawing-room fire after dinner! I think the intense hugging he gave me at the last moment was somewhat vicarious — for lack of you!

My best love to "Alice" (she will think I am the unrighteous chastising the ungodly to object to Miss H. calling Nina "Nina"!) and thank her for telling me I could not live in Ceylon. As I *may not*, it is well to know there is a good reason. Rex has been so comforting. He sent me a very nice bit of butter the other day by saying it was such a blessing "*in Emergencies*" to have a *wise wife*! It was very soothing. . . . Now I *will* leave off chatting!

Yours very affectionately,

JULIANA HORATIA EWING

P.S. — I hope the General and I shall be forgiven all the bad words we use about Mr. Gladstone. What do his Scotch admirers think of matters in the Transvaal?

(3)

Frimhurst: May 13, 1881.

. . . Oh, I think I must tell you of a funny scene we had the other day as a result of our tension on Alice's behalf. . . .

Scene — The Drawing Room.

Costumes — Our best company manners.

Dram. Personæ — Mrs. Wickham and Mrs. Herries (deaf as ever, poor thing) kindly calling on me, I and the girls, the General, and David (bringing in tea).

Naturally there were many enquiries for Alice and Mr. Davidson, arising out of enquiries after you, and we got through *the delicate subject* very satisfactorily considering that a gentleman was present and one of the ladies had to be bawled to. Old Mrs. Wickham was still nodding with sympathy, she and the General having drawn up knee to knee, and we all looking so exactly posed for a comedy, when re-enter David *with a telegram*. We all fluttered. Mrs. Wickham

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nodded herself nearly into the General's lap, *he* put his spectacles well out of the way on the top of his head (as I observe he generally does when he has anything he is anxious to see clearly). Mrs. Herries smiled and nodded at her mother as much as to say no explanations were needed, David grinned blandly, and the dear General tore and fumbled at the envelope with anxiety, and then stopped — drove his hand into his trousers pocket for a shilling and roared in stentorian tones of command to David to take it to the man then and there. Exit David looking disappointed, and the General began again at the envelope, but before he got it fairly opened he bawled again to David to stop, as there might be an answer. Then out came the telegram and he read it, and then, to our amazement, dismissed David with a vigour to which the previous words of command had been as nothing, and then fell back in his chair in convulsions of laughter. . . .

Can you imagine the situation when we learned it was a telegram from the fishmonger to say he was out of whitebait? and as the General justly said afterwards, "He's paid a shilling and I've paid a shilling and we might have had the whitebait for 1s. 6d.!" . . .

. . . You must let me be a little egoistical in the process of letting you know how kindly I feel the *graciousness* of your hospitality in allowing me to lay the flattering unction to my soul that I am of use to you by staying on with your young ones. My spine is so troublesome that if I were in London I could go nowhere and see nothing. And now can you imagine an Earthly Paradise that I could wish for better suited to my helplessness and my craving for fresh air than this lovely place of yours, where I can move from your comfortable old fashioned sofa, and in a few strides (my giant strides!) sit under pine trees? — where I can see dear Nina and Violet and their friends play tennis, and sit among them and not feel out of everything without the fatigue of "going to a party," — and where I can sketch day by day and hear nightingales in the evening without an expedition to reach either privilege! . . .

(4)

Frimhurst: June 2, 1881.

. . . We are all in very good case and it is very hot, but deliciously cool in your drawing-room and the sun draws out all the pine per-

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fume all over the place. The evenings are glorious. After dinner the girls and I squeeze ourselves on to one seat (made by Nina) on the cutting and frighten away the nightingales by our unseemly yells, for Nina lives in dread of a mad dog and Violet of a cockchafer in her hair, and they respectively try to startle each other whilst I am eaten alive by gnats . . . ("such country pleasures do we prove").

(5)

Frimhurst: June 17, 1881.

. . . The girls *were* so good over my failing them for the dance. I would not for worlds have deprived poor Violet — so new to it — of one of those nice friends' little dances. And indeed I had quite looked forward to combining a chaperone's privileges of easy chairs and refreshment with some pleasant chats in that familiar spot, the Club House, myself. I got up and dressed and was up an hour or two — and then had to roll back ignominiously to bed! I cannot forgive myself even now. . . . Ascot has been very good for me, too!! mentally it has soothed my conscience for having lost them a treat, and physically I have had the only thing I am fit for just now, absolute quiet and silence with just an amusing little chat at the end of the day. But I have had a stringent parade of the children before my bed on each occasion, and they looked charming. I am sorry Violet's dress was not made with a gathered body but still it looked very nice. The pink print, which *has* a gathered body is so very becoming to her. It suits her figure and makes her look so young! You will laugh at this as recommendation for her but she is very easily made to look five years older than she is. Do you not think so? I'm afraid brains, of which she has a *very* good share, always have a tendency to age people in youth, though perhaps rather otherwise when they become really old. People who think get bent brows and set lips. . . . I told Violet how Mrs. Jelf admired her (she thinks her prettier than Nina) for I have great theories that far more girls suffer from doubting their own attractiveness than from vanity, especially if they have pretty sisters.

The dress Nina got in exchange for the rather dreadful print she brought down from town is very becoming. They have certainly had three very ideal Ascot days and I think the General has enjoyed himself very much too, though they do not give a report of him such

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as Mrs. Byrne gave of her Colonel: "I lose him . . . I know not where he is! English husbands are so *sly*. I assure you Colonel Byrne . . . he is a ME-TE-OR!" . . .

(6)

71 Warwick Rd., Earl's Court: July 13, 1881.
. . . I know you will be glad to hear that my goods and chattels came, that the day was fine, in fact roasting, that the losses, breakages, &c., are on the whole less than one might expect, and that the shipping agents did everything, as I think, at very reasonable charge. My sitting room here ("the Sunflower room" as it is called from its paper, which is less startling than it sounds) does look quite pretty though I say it as shouldn't. I have been living in it, sitting on the floor among my odds and ends, with a carpenter and a charwoman. The carpenter handy but sententious, the charwoman willing but absolutely unreliable — however I suppose if she'd been born with brains for a Prime Minister she would have preferred the place. But she *has* reminded me of the cook Dr. Johnson dismissed for the reason that — "Madam, she was all wiggle-waggle. I could get nothing categorical out of her." . . .

(7)

Sheffield: October 23, 1881.
. . . I have got to a time of life when one feels the tragedy of "B.A." ¹¹ more deeply than Nina and Violet can do! Life holds so much less real affection and accomplished desire than one hopes when one is young. But B.A.'s have a terrible touch of the comic at times! Dot ¹² has bolted from a most unexpected swain in this neighbourhood who has broken loose with all the desperation that sometimes characterizes very shy people when they do turn the corner! — and as I am staying with his aunt (an old engagement not to be got out of) I am the prey of brotherly attentions — "in vain — in vain!" I am really very sorry, though as he is 27 I hope he will soon recover, and if she could have taken to him you will understand how I should have loved to see her in a comfortable home of her own. But I always do feel one could do anything for a home *but*

¹¹ B.A., a family expression meaning Blighted Attachment.

¹² Her sister.

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marry! All I can do is to listen to his Cantata! He (prematurely) composed one, words and music, which he advised himself to call "The Consummation of Bliss." The night before last I heard this all through! Since the fatal "No" he is composing one on Ariadne. If he sings as Bacchus I don't quite know how I shall bear it!! Don't think me a brute, and he is so good — and so scientific (the greatest possible attraction for her) that I wish . . . well, I wish he were someone else! . . .

(8)

All Hallows Evening, 1881.

. . . I am staying here with a sister of poor Major Poole — the one who fell at Laings Neck. His people seem to have been very much devoted to him and it has been a terrible sorrow. His mother is very old and partly paralysed and has lost her memory. He was her favorite son, and yet after she heard of it she forgot it. But she was troubled by seeing the tears of the daughters who are at home (one of whom was Major Poole's favorite sister to whom he has left all his sketches) and she remembered enough to know that it was for one fallen in battle, and pulled herself together enough to say, "I am very sorry for the parents of that poor young man!" . . . It seemed to me the most tragic and pathetic thing I have heard for long. Old Cetewayo refused to eat for 24 hours after his death, which was touching enough. . . .

If the General does me the honor to read "Daddy Darwin's Dovecot" I hope he will recognise one turn in the workhouse boy's letter! . . .

(9)

Sheffield: November 20, 1881.

Dearest Mrs. Smyth, — Your two letters were very welcome and very very kind, but I grudge the use of your poor wrist — and I must thank you off hand for your kindness in putting your approval of "Daddy Darwin's Dovecot" into words — such full encouraging words. . . .

Of course the problem for the three past years has been with me whether I should ever redeem from physical collapse my brain vigour, such as it was. My old doctor up here you know at first believed that I never should, and then it was on the strength of his convic-

tion that I should, after all, that he refused to let me risk Malta last time. I had to work "D.D.D." (looks bad!) very carefully; very short continuous work muddled me and brought on headache, but I did feel as if I had got the grip of my faculties again, though rather like a spring that has lost elasticity and can't be pressed with a heavy hand.

It is a great pleasure to feel able to follow my *métier* again, from so many points of view. At times it feels as if this homeless phase of my life would never come to an end . . . and being able to work again is a great help over the time. Also I am quite convinced it is the only way — if at all — in which I can ever be of any real use to my fellow creatures . . . and it is a great pleasure!

I am so glad you like my new attempt and are so kind as to tell me so. Word-painting is such a pleasure, like playing a game of skill — to me — and I take such minute pains, and cut and polish, that no praise is so pleasant as the flattery that the word-painting has fallen artistically on the reader's ears! Caldecott complained that I left nothing to an artist and ought never to be illustrated, but he has followed me with such sympathy that he has got the local colour of this neighbourhood in a marvellous fashion. The bare fact of the theft of the House Doves and their recovery at the call of the little lad who loved them is true.

I am busy now trying to do a tale to compete for a Yankee prize of £100 — Rash, isn't it? I fear there's no chance for me — too good writers against me! But please wish me well. . . .

Violet's letters were delightful. I deeply enjoy such home touches, as even their scrambling conclusions "Postbag here and the General says it *must* be closed!" . . . I can shut my eyes and be in Frimhurst at once! . . . I do enjoy Frimhurst news — knowing so well, and caring so much for it all. I have a sort of 11th Commandment that keeps me honour-bound from much talking of the possibilities of the future of young people I care for, but other people's love affairs *are* amazingly interesting! There is for ever the great problem of the two truths: (i) that most pain in the relation of men and women comes from misunderstanding or misknowledge of each other — a misknowledge which is sometimes irreparable — and that therefore the more free and full the intercourse before Gordian knots are tied, the better the chance of either perfect happiness

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or the avoidance of misery; and that (2) intellectual friendship is a far more binding and deep-seated tie than a mere commonplace admiration and acquaintance — and if one person gets the blade and the other only the handle of that edge-tool it is a sad business. I think I have at last made up my mind as to the only thing to aim at — but I shall reserve this theory for a letter to Violet! Meanwhile if I *should* hear that those 2 dear children are going to march with the R.E.'s, an Aunt's best benedictions will not be wanting! . . .

(10)

[NOTE. — *I add this letter, though of a later date; it was the last in the packet.*]

Taunton: October 19, 1883.

. . . I hasten to warn you that I sent the General a copy of Caldecott's "Jackanapes" the other day, and that I have ordered my six André Verse Books to go to you with my best love — a little offering in memory of all that dear Frimhurst and your never-changing kindness did towards the slow process of giving me back the power to work. I never forget it, even when we have not exchanged letters for a while; I never shall forget it dear Mrs. Smyth unless my brain gives way altogether! . . . When I say I warn you of the books it was because I remembered that when I sent you "Brothers of Pity," in your haste to be honest you paid Smith for it! . . .

I have a favour to ask. I am the happy possessor of a small garden — when I came to it it was a potatoe patch. My friends have been so good to me and it is now very full (and things *do* grow here!) but my soul is set upon polyanthus and my jobbing gardener says: "sim as if they be quite out of fashion 'bout here. There *was* a gen'l'm as used to grow 'un but a died some years back." Now I do so well remember your polyanthus in the long walk, the best I ever saw and your own raising from seed. If they still flourish, knowing how polyanthus increase at the root I think perhaps you could spare me one or two offsets from the different kinds down the walk. . . . *Not if you are saving them for any special purpose*, but if you can spare a few in a mustard tin — or wrapped in a little moss or hay in brown paper — this red earth and reeking climate will soon develop them to my delight and *in memoriam* of the Frimhurst walk. . . .

[D]

From Edward Grieg

[Translation]

Kopenhagen: April 17, 1879.

Honoured Miss Smyth, — This time there are many kindnesses to thank you for; firstly for being so charming as to keep your promise; secondly for being so charming as to write about it; thirdly for being so charming as to send the charming Variations. The one thing that is not charming is . . . the legions upon legions of mistakes in the MS.! There are moments when I feel as if I were playing the riot-scene in the *Meistersinger*! Your permission to correct these mistakes “according to taste” is all very fine, but . . . !

Well, I am looking forward to the E minor piece, and as punishment for the mistakes I must insist on hearing the story behind it. Such stories have great value for me; I nearly always have them myself, and when not, the background of the picture seems to me to be lacking. Our Herzogenbergs will say this is nonsense — and with reason; but where should we all be without nonsense! Where music would be without Wagner? . . . No! in a far, far worse case!

I send no messages to the Herzogenbergs because I hope to find time to write to them today. Good-bye, and, once more, warmest thanks for what you sent me and friendliest greetings.

From your

EDWARD GRIEG

CHAPTER XXVIII. *Autumn 1881 to Autumn 1882*

I WENT back to Leipzig late that year and have but few recollections of the winter '81-'82; moreover at this moment the home letters, in which a word sometimes fires a train of memory, give out altogether. But I well remember that for some time past I had suffered under a sense that I was not as much to Lisl as formerly, or at all events, to use a current phrase, not giving satisfaction. From the point of view of work there was no fault to be found; indeed, the piles of dated MSS. in my loft bear witness to a period of extreme diligence; the trouble sprang from what was unfortunately a salient characteristic, my knack of constantly forming new ties. Not that she was jealous in the ordinary sense of the word; she knew very well that, come who might, no one could oust her from her place; it was rather that she was distressed and bewildered by what seemed to her indications of a spendthrift moral nature ("*ein vergeuden schöner Kraft*," as she put it).

Until we had met, all in laughing at the exclusive Stockhausen tradition, Lisl had been really carrying it on — less perhaps on principle than because they were a self-sufficing couple; and it is certain that but for the two factors I spoke of, my music and her childlessness, I should never have been admitted into the bond. As far back as 1880 she had once told me in a moment of irritation that Heinrich sometimes found the *ménage à trois* a trial — as well he might with such an extortionate third — and in face of this all-round insatiability I daresay she asked herself whether I fully appreciated the exception made in my favour. Much as they both venerated Conrad Fiedler the rapid friendship with his wife had not enchanted her, and now there was an English newcomer to reckon with, evidently a remarkable and arresting personality . . . What next? In one of her letters there is a fine defence of her own instincts in these matters, and she never could understand how I, all in admiring them, could not change my own.

Very differently did my mother, a really jealous being by nature, treat the subject. Though her contemporary correspondence with me has vanished, the most precious bit of her handwriting I possess is dated December 1881, or rather that is the postmark, for she

never dated a letter in her life. A great friend of mine, Captain Hubert Foster in the Royal Engineers, who came to Leipzig that autumn, wrote my news to my mother, and after her death he sent me her beautiful reply. It is too personal to give here, but the sentence I quoted a few pages back is taken from it; my needs, my happiness were the weapons with which she fought down jealousy! . . . This letter was sent me with a covering note in which the following words occur: "Re-reading its contents, I am deeply touched to see how constantly your mother thought of you. I had kept it all these years, I suppose because it shows such tender regard for you, and everything about my friends interests me; but now I think it may be a pleasure for you to have it." Shortly after his visit, a windfall having put me in possession of a few extra pounds, I flew over to England at Christmas for a week on a surprise visit, and although I spent two or three days of it with the Garretts, that was one of my most flawless reunions with Mother — enough time to enjoy being together, and not enough to rub each other up the wrong way!

As a rule I spent Christmas, which means a good deal to Germans, in the Humboldtstrasse, and it saddened Lisl that I chose that moment to disappear. But on quite other than sentimental grounds was another project combated not only by her but by Aloysius; namely my intention, announced to them in the spring, of passing my next winter in Italy.

This decision was taken rather suddenly. Desire for contact with other forms of beauty than music, for the South in short, had grown and grown till there was no resisting it, and I felt too that having worked like a galley slave for four years at theory I should be all the better for putting some of it into practice without supervision. That Aloysius fought so hard to dissuade me is a touching proof that the artistic well-being of his pupil preoccupied him more than the inconveniences of her everlasting presence in his house. What a pity, he argued, to get out of harness just when one is beginning to move freely in it! and he further reminded me that Brahms had restudied counterpoint from beginning to end when he was over forty. The obvious rejoinder was that I would gladly do the same when I reached that age, or even sooner, and I stuck to my guns. As for Lisl, being herself devoid of world-curiosity as the Germans

call it, she could not fathom my state of mind at all. Her motto might have been a quotation from Carlyle I came across the other day: "Happy men live in the present for its bounty suffices; and wise men too, for they know its value." When a chance of a new experience came along she took it, but in the meantime was quite happy on her own line of rails; hence these Italian longings were looked upon as one more manifestation of an immoderate hunger for life — the *Lebensteufel* she so often bewailed in me. So I went back to England slightly, very slightly, in disgrace with my best friends, and it was settled that if dates fitted in, we were to meet at Venice in the late autumn on my way to Florence via Switzerland, where I was to be initiated into mountaineering by Wach.

I did a good deal of music, real music, that summer with the von Glehns at Sydenham, and in the course of a projected performance in public of something of mine — a quartet I think — found out for the first time, and wrote to Lisl, that English musicians are refractory to dotted semiquavers — a striking symptom of the go-as-you-please theory of life. I remember too that the charming singer von zer Mühlen, whom I often met at the von Glehns', told me that recently, on his mentioning Lisl and me, Brahms had remarked: "My God, children, but those are two musical women tucked away in the horrible Leipzig!" This also was passed on to Lisl, but in semi-sarcastic vein, for though I was pleased that others should know the great man thought so highly of us, his good opinion in no wise added to my stature or flattered me personally. And I vicariously felt the same for Lisl; but to my amazement that incorrigibly humble person was quite delighted and thought this tribute a great feather in our caps.

Towards the end of my stay in England the Garretts came to Frimhurst. In spite of their arty clothes, the effect of which on Papa's mind I had rather dreaded, they captivated even him; and what is more, Mother's jealousy was instantly swamped in her extraordinary appreciation of Rhoda, whom I think she liked better than all the rest of my friends put together. A great point in their favour with Papa was that they "braided their hair," as he put it, so as to leave the forehead uncovered, instead of wearing fringes like his daughters and their friends, which he always maintained re-

duced human beings to the level of apes. There was an amusing scene at which unfortunately I did not assist. My mother had been complaining of the cold in the famous bow-window and the reasonable Agnes suggested a shawl; but Mother, who though not in her first youth was by no means unshapely, replied with some hesitation that she didn't like shawls "because they hide the figure so." Whereupon Agnes exclaimed: "Isn't that rather kind of them?" Awestruck I asked how this very characteristic remark had been received, and was relieved to hear Mother had only laughed.

I sometimes wonder if one's vision of a past incident or a lost friend is intensified or weakened by the absence of all written record. Knowing my habits, Rhoda, who was extremely reserved, had made me promise to destroy her letters as soon as read, and I did so. In the light of what happened this is a promise I never gave again. All I possess of her now is a bit of heather, plucked, after I had left England, on Charlotte Brontë's grave, and a little crooked battered stone she once picked up on the beach remarking that by the time I was forty my heart would look like that! . . . It was decided that they were to join me at Florence the following Easter, and in August I left for Switzerland via Newhaven, Rhoda hurling a forgotten box of a hundred cigarettes after me as the boat moved away from the quay.

I stopped at Rouen and like many other people was disappointed with everything except St. Ouen, till towards evening I climbed up the great chalk cliff three hundred fifty feet above the town. It had rained all day; the sun was setting, the Seine — all red and yellow and blue — lay at my feet, the new town shrouded in cloud and smoke on one side of me, and on the other the old town with its five grand churches settled down in an armchair of green and white hills. I wonder if anyone will ever see it like that again; but let no one who has a chance omit to climb that cliff and try. I left Rouen doubting if anything more intense in the way of joy for the eyes could be found in Switzerland.

The Wach chalet in the commune of Wilderswyl was about a thousand feet above Interlaken, and though its owners were a thing apart, in no way differed from all chalets. There I got to know

Wach in quite a new aspect and the one I loved best — a big boy in knickerbockers, madder than any adolescent about mountaineering. So impatient was he to initiate his guest that he would have arranged our first climb for the day after my arrival but for the gentle icy opposition of Lili, who guessed the fatigues of a long journey third-class, and insisted on twenty-four hours of rest.

And now let me ask anyone who from youth upwards has greatly loved two things, scenery and adventure, if memory holds anything to compare with such a first experience. The Schildhorn is of course a beginner's mountain but it gives one a taste of the whole thing — an unequalled view of "the three Bernese giants," as it is almost impossible to help calling them, and above all the sonority of perpetual avalanches — one of the most beautiful noises under heaven. The boys were then about twelve and fourteen, and there was a moment when it seemed the younger was about to receive a thrashing from his father for collapsing in the snow and declaring, while tears ran down his blue little nose, that he could go no farther; but who could stand up, or rather lie down, against Wach? On the top of that mountain I noticed what was so often to strike me afterwards, that in the joy of difficulties vanquished the mind of Faint-hearts is miraculously cleansed from all memory of these passing weaknesses.

Another thing: for my part I have seldom undertaken a big climb without saying to myself at some particular stage: "Never again!" yet once more safe at home, only one thought possesses you — how soon funds will allow of another expedition. I explain this passion, far the most violent in the way of sport I have ever felt, by two things: firstly, as Barrès says somewhere, a landscape won by your own intense effort has a peculiar grip on you — almost a physical as well as an æsthetic grip; and secondly there is the danger not only to yourself but to companions, who may pay for a false step of yours with their lives. And if that is not an intoxicating element in pleasure I don't know what is! Of danger of course I had no experience on that baby mountain, yet a premonition — for Wach slipped on a glacier and shot down a good way before he could stop himself with his axe. Nothing much would have happened in any case, but it gave one an idea of the thing.

I began my career as mountain-climber with a bit of bad luck. At

a dance in England, saving a fall of the usual kind in what Lady Ponsonby called our *ton de garnison* neighbourhood where spurs were for ever catching in gowns, I had strained one of my knees slightly, but felt it for only a day or two. Needless to say it was this very knee that was struck bullet-fashion by a bounding bit of rock on the up journey, about four thousand feet from the top. In all I walked eleven hours with that damaged knee, including leaping down the mountain with the leg held stiff, which of course jarred the hip, and the result was for the time an end to mountaineering. The disappointment only ceased to rankle when for the first time I saw the Gotthard and was well on the way to Venice, little knowing what awaited me there.

To my amazement I was met on the platform by Heinrich only, and horror-stricken I learned that Lisl was once more in family fetters. Not only had her mother suddenly turned up, but also the one being who in their youth had slipped through the meshes of Frau von Stockhausen's anti-friend net and been tolerated as high-born distant cousin — a young lady of a certain age, called "Mathilde," hitherto on mere cousinly terms with Lisl, but who now at once made common cause with my enemy in cold-shouldering the foreign intruder.

Never had anyone a more disastrous first sight of Venice. I had cut short my stay at home on purpose to see everything with the Herzogenbergs; what happened was the most humiliating and unsuccessful game of hide-and-seek ever played, it being understood that the sight of me drove Frau von Stockhausen into convulsions. Four days were spent lurking in corridors, slinking into side chapels, jamming down my parasol over my face in gondolas, and so forth; till at last, given Lisl's dislike of conflicts and utter helplessness as regards the whole situation, I departed prematurely — in sorrow but still more in anger — for Florence. I had thought my mother difficult to deal with, but she was sweet reasonableness itself compared to that beautiful old termagant.

CHAPTER XXIX. *Autumn 1882 to Christmas 1882*

THE ARRIVAL at Florence was rather dismal, for Venetian wrath was yet undigested and I had no friends there to welcome me, though plenty in store. Julia, Lisl's sister, lived there, also the Hildebrands (intimates of all my group), and the Fiedlers talked of coming later. Meanwhile two things had to be done: (1) choose a dwelling-place, (2) pick up an English girl I had promised to look after — that is, she was to live wherever I did but without our interfering with each other's way of life. My plan of action about finding an apartment was always the same; having taken a "cabman's room" in some modest hotel, I selected a street or block of buildings the outlook from the back of which — open with plenty of trees — seemed promising. I then searched on doorposts for possible notices of "rooms to let" and walked up and down the staircases of such houses till I found what I wanted. Having luck almost at once in the quarter I preferred, Via dei Serragli, I went off to fetch my charge, Amey, the guardianship of whom had come to me as Lisl said — using a wonderful German expression — "as the box on the ear comes to the child."

Amey was by way of studying painting. I never caught her at it, but before we had walked many yards her true career was revealed, in that she flew at a policeman and began urging him in wonderful French to come with her at once to the market, and arrest several old women whom she had seen pouring shot down the gullets of geese to increase their weight — a usual Italian practice in those days. The idea of beginning Florentine life in a police court did not appeal to me, and Amey was infuriated at my apparent indifference to these horrors; so our alliance was ushered in by a brawl in the street followed by her walking off in a rage, to return reluctantly inasmuch as I alone knew where our house was. Poor Amey spent most of her time that winter alternately trying to represent in her sole person a non-existent S.P.C.A., and fulminating at me for merely looking the other way. Otherwise she was a good soul though queer-natured. Of course, as we all know, the cruelty to animals one is perpetually witnessing is the one flaw in the otherwise perfect bliss of living in Italy; and the wondering reply you get to protests:

"ma non sono cristiani!" ("but they are not Christians!") looks as if the old Vatican government were the fountainhead of the mischief, as it certainly is of the beggar plague. But what can a passing stranger do? . . .

My room, a fine airy one with a beautiful view across gardens, roofs, and "loggie," cost seventeen francs a month! Our landlady was a jovial person who began by telling us she hoped we would receive our gentlemen friends whenever we liked, the significance of which remark did not strike me till years afterwards, though I remember a shade of disappointment passed across her face when I said we had none. We bought our own food and cooked it ourselves in a little kitchen fitted with the usual duplicate arrangements for charcoal fires; and when we were not on speaking terms, which sometimes happened, the silent preparation of our respective cutlets might have been part of some primeval religious rite, the two holes for charcoal being let into a sort of brick altar, and not three feet apart. The worst part of the house was of course the sanitary arrangements, and the road to the best effort of that kind on the part of the architect — the best on our floor at least — lay through my room. This road was of course impassable in war time, a factor which made for peace as far as Amey was concerned.

Not being Pater or the terrible Ruskin, I will not launch forth into ravings about Florence; besides which, my leg being evidently in a bad way, enterprise was checked for the moment. Lest the dreaded fate of immobility should overtake me, which it soon did, I determined to lay in a stock of human companionship, and at once went to call on the Hildebrands. They lived outside the Porta Romana in a convent at S. Paola di Francesco, the immense ground-floor of which had been turned into studios. From the floor above, decorated with frescoes by Hildebrand and his friends, and full of beautiful things, you got what is perhaps the most famous view of Florence, and behind the house was a neglected garden. The family consisted of several children, mostly girls — all of them budding sculptors, painters, or poetesses — and Frau Hildebrand, once a celebrated man-enslaver and still gracious and desirable though no longer in her first youth. One almost regretted that so much receptivity to the touch of life had been finally tamed to domestic uses, for nowadays she was rather by way of being fattish and moth-

erly on principle. Yet I remember one evening of reminiscent youthful grace, when after some little domestic festival they all accompanied their guests as far as the Porta Romana; then suddenly she danced a step or two down hill among the fireflies, and I saw a graceful Bacchante hanging aslant between me and the moon. She was a great dear, radiating warmth, kindness, and hospitality, but I got on best with him.

Hildebrand is, I am certain, one of the great artists of all time. Lisl was rather shocked at my saying he impressed me more even than Brahms, but I think the remark was sound, for there are many great composers of modern times, but how many sculptors of Hildebrand's stature, I wonder. He was of a serene gay temperament, absolutely natural, and I think "a-moral" is the term to express his complete detachment, in theory at least, from morality and current views on the conduct of life. Children, for instance, should not be brought up but left to grow like wildflowers; and the results of this principle in his own young family did not appeal to my English notions. Lisl once remarked that if he were not upright and kindly by nature — in fact a good man — he would be a very bad one, and this he allowed was true.

There was a queer mixture of simplicity and shrewdness about him — a lawyer's shrewdness I mean, not the peasant cunning of a Rodin, aware of the market and, for all his genius, never forgetting it. The public only existed for Hildebrand as a corrective. He used to ask what one thought of his statues, and once when I said a certain arm looked to me too long, he explained that though as a matter of fact it was too short, the remark put him on the track of the real error, which was elsewhere; a thing I have often felt myself about the judgment of the man in the street — the only criticism of real value, as a rule, to the artist. He was a tremendous arguer and theorizer, and would discourse till all hours of the night on a subject like *Raumvorstellung* for instance (concept of cubic content is the nearest English I can find) and its connection with plastic art. His talk was so free from pedantry, so luminous, that any artist, or indeed any cultivated being, could listen to it with pleasure, and watch his clear laughing eyes become like pinpoints, as, with raised forefinger, he drove his argument home.

Frau Hildebrand, whose brain was not theoretical, had lived all



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her life among artists, knew the jargon, and didn't want to be out of it. But alas! like all creative minds Hildebrand's moved on, and she complained that when after having mastered the latest theory she was carefully expounding it to admiring newcomers, he would suddenly whirl round and cry out impatiently from the other side of the room: "*Ach! das ist es ja gar nicht!*" ("That's not it *at all!*") She used to laugh at herself for these cultural yearnings and ambitions, but to laugh at one's weaknesses and to give them up are two different matters.

Like many "picturing artists" as Germans call them, Hildebrand was deeply musical, played the violin and viola, and could transpose at sight, much to my admiration, whether from the alto, bass, or violin clef, with the greatest ease; but it was impossible to get him beyond Haydn and Beethoven. In the same way all he knew or wanted to know of English literature was Shakespeare and *Tom Jones*, which he thought the finest novel in the world — no great compliment, for the only other novel he had read was *Elective Affinities*. And this book he actually had the effrontery to defend, as will many a German who knows better. Asked if he considered the perpetual reference to that terrible gardening bore of a lover, the Captain, as "*der gute Mann*" (the excellent man) is stimulating to the imagination, he would innocently reply: "Why not?" In short the author of *Wahlverwandschaften* is Goethe. As for new books, he flatly refused to open one in any language.

Why I speak of him in the past tense I cannot think, for just before the war he was alive and I hope is so still. I went to see them when passing through Munich in 1914; he had been very ill and the bounding vitality and loquaciousness of former years were gone, but he talked enthralingly about modern work and said, with Hildebrand simplicity: "Compared to these *artists* I feel like a mere workman" — nor I fancy did he wish to feel otherwise. I repeated to him a remark of Rodin's, whom he greatly admired — with reservations — about its being the office of a sculptor to transcend, in the interests of suggestiveness and mystery, the limitations of his models; and the old pinpoint look came back into his eyes as he said: "It seems to me nothing can exceed the mystery and suggestiveness of Nature."

Some people complain that his portrait busts slavishly copy Ren-

aissance work, and on the other hand his treatment of the nude has been found classically cold. My own feeling is that everything he does is so intensely Hildebrand no matter who his progenitors may be, so absolutely free from concession to anything but his own artistic vision, that his work must surely be on the very first line. For many years taboo in Berlin, because when invited by the All-Highest to collaborate in the Sieges-Allee he freely spoke his mind on that terrible subject, he is as good as unknown in England; indeed, I think the only originals of his in the United Kingdom are the bust of Baroness von Stockhausen I referred to, and a portrait in high relief of Mr. Gerald Balfour, which I am told is at Whittinghame.

Of the other couple of prospective friends, the Brewsters, I had of course learned a great deal from Lisl, her deep admiration for her extraordinary sister being the main theme of many letters.¹ It appeared that these relations of her were superhumans and that they lived in an Ivory Tower, knowing not a soul in Florence except the Hildebrands. This solitary frequentation was born of the fact that once, in pre-S.Francesco days, Hildebrand found the mysterious lady who lived on the floor below them sitting patiently on the stairs with a sprained ankle, whereupon he carried her into her apartment. Nothing short of that would have done it. I knew that Julia Brewster was eleven years older than her husband (who at that time was thirty-one) and I had heard about their extraordinary views on marriage, which did not commend themselves to Lisl, though, as she often insisted, they lived in a world of their own and could not be judged by ordinary standards. It appeared that they had only gone through the marriage ceremony in church in order to avoid wounding the feelings of Julia's family and had found it very "comic" at the time — especially some incident about hassocks which I have forgotten — but it was not looked upon as a binding engagement. If either of the couple should weary of married life, or care for someone else, it was understood that the bond was dissoluble, and there was a firm belief on both sides that no such event could possibly destroy, or even essentially interrupt, their "friendship" as they called it, founded as it was on more

¹ Appendix, p. 272, No. 4; p. 273, No. 5; p. 276, No. 11.

stable elements than mere marriage ties. "Do not be afraid," they said, "of anything life may bring; face it, assimilate it, and the gods will see you through." (I may add that such was H. B.'s gospel to the end, though as the years passed he came to realize there is a thing called human nature, and didn't quarrel with it for sometimes playing havoc with theories.)

This much I had gleaned from hearsay concerning Lisl's relations; face to face with them I soon found out that the real hermit was Julia, her husband being rather an embryonic lover of humanity, hitherto accustomed, owing to circumstances, to pay exclusive attention to abstractions. As I learned many years afterwards, Julia was just then beginning to notice in him a new and strange impulse to extend a furtive hand to his fellow creatures and thought it wisest to offer no opposition. Thus it came to pass that instead of being politely warned off the premises as I had half expected, I was warmly welcomed in Via de' Bardi.

My acquaintance with the man destined to become my greatest friend began, it is amusing to reflect, with "a little aversion" on my part, although his personality was delightful. Having for years had no real intercourse with anyone save his wife, he was very shy — a shyness like that of a well-brought-up child, which took the form of extreme simplicity, as though he were falling back on first principles to see him through. In one who was obviously what is called an *âme d'élite* this trait was of charming effect, and in spite of it he managed to be witty, amusing, and, when he felt one liked him, companionable. He seemed to have read all books, to have thought all thoughts; and last but not least was extremely good-looking — clean-shaven but for a moustache, a perfect nose and brow, brown eyes set curiously far apart, and fair fluffy hair. It was the face of a dreamer and yet of an acute observer, and his manner was the gentlest, kindest, most courteous manner imaginable. But alas! . . . as thinker I found him detestable! Half American, half English, brought up in France, he was a passionate Latin, and the presence of an Anglomaniac, loud in praise of the sportsman type of male, and, what was worse, in love with Germany, goaded him into paradoxes and *boutades* it was impossible to listen to with equanimity: such as that Shakespere was an agglomerate of bombast and bad writing; that Goethe's gush about Nature was posi-

tively indecent; that a work written without *de l'affectation* is coarse; that spontaneity is the death of inspiration, and so on.

His inveterate dislike of everything German was shared, oddly enough, by his wife, who, half German, half Austrian, had a Polish strain on the mother's side. Julia was the strangest human being, if human she was, that I or anyone else ever came across, fascinating, enigmatic, unapproachable, with a Schiller-like profile and pale yellow hair; and though completely under the spell, I knew far less of her at the end of my two Italian winters than at the beginning. The home medium of this extraordinary couple was French — a fact that deeply impressed Lisl and me; they addressed each other in the second person plural, and though evidently the greatest of friends never uttered a word in presence of others that could suggest anything as *bourgeois* as affection. Given their turn of mind, it may be imagined that the matrimonial angle of the Herzogenbergs seemed to them comic, parochial, and slightly redolent of sauerkraut; moreover Julia spoke of Lisl as one might of some charming, very musical woman one had met somewhere and would be quite pleased to meet again if not pressed to fix the date. I was jealous for my friend, thinking of her uncritical worship of this gently critical sister, but the Brewsters were more amused at my enthusiasm than convinced that anyone who patted her husband's hand in public could be a really civilized human being. In fact the domestic aspect of life was deemed negligible, and my first impression of that household was two dear little fair-haired children, beautifully dressed, to whom, as they slunk out of the drawing-room, no one said good-night. I believe this attitude was modified later; certainly when after many years, during which we never met, their father and I came together again, he had become to his children what he was, I think, to everyone who knew him intimately — the one person who counted.

To sum up, the Brewsters came under no known category; both of them were stimulating, original talkers and quite ready to discuss their ethical scheme, including its application to domestic life, but of course only as a general thesis. On the other hand their friend Frau Hildebrand, human and natural to a fault, who claimed for herself the wisdom of Sancho Panza, would privately maintain that all these fine theories must inevitably crumble at the first

touch of the realities against which they so carefully fenced themselves in — a proposition I vehemently disputed, being quite carried off my feet by the impersonal magnificence and daring of their outlook. This readiness to cope with any and every turn of the wheel on your own terms went well with my views as to how life should be lived — but I had never dreamed of courage and love of adventure on such a scale as this.

A few weeks after my arrival, and not to my great regret (for as usual it was the woman who at first absorbed all my attention), H. B. suddenly decided to go off lion-hunting in Algeria — a project which his recent mastering of Arabic had perhaps something to do with. But of the wiles of Arabs he knew less, and, as we learned later, was well exploited, achieving nothing more than once hearing a lion roar in the distance.

One day in November, by which time I was coming to the conclusion that a cripple's lot was evidently to be mine, a telegram was put into my hand. Rhoda had not written for a week and Agnes had let me know she was rather ill; this message told me she was dead. . . . Italy slipped away from me and for many weeks I only saw Rustington.

There are few spots on earth, I imagine, of which anyone can say: "There, at least, I was perfectly happy," but whenever the beach at Rustington suddenly stands before my mind's eye, that thought swims up with the vision. . . . I am glad to think of her lying within shadow of the old church, close to the stretch of sea we both loved better than any other. . . .

For some reason I never fathomed Rhoda's death swept away the clouds between me and Lisl. Perhaps she was sorry for me, perhaps she realized that now more than ever I clung to her — the one blessed, and as I believed unchangeable, thing in a cruel changeful world. And I often wonder, too, whether it was a cry of grief about Rhoda's letters — "Keep, keep," I wrote to her, "the letters of people you love" — that made her resume the habit, dropped since nearly two years, of keeping mine. Anyhow our relation became from that time onwards what it had been in early days; and so it remained till it ended.

CHAPTER XXX. *Christmas 1882 to Summer 1883*

ON Christmas Day, in my holly-decked apartment, Amey and I entertained young Heinrich Brockhaus, who was passing through Florence on his way to Rome. Amey had a home receipt for plum-pudding and I another, given me by Julia's Irish governess, Miss Gardener. Fortunately, as was only decent, peace and goodwill reigned in our establishment at that moment, and we stirred our respective messes on the brick altar in friendly rivalry. I had inspired distrust by enquiring if it made any real difference whether you mix in the yolk and the white of an egg separately or together, but my plum-pudding won in a canter — as it was bound to do, according to Miss Gardener, the receipt being Irish.

The bill of fare of the first dinner a cook dishes up remains for ever engraven on the tablets of memory. We had *printanière* soup, a roast fowl with tongue and mashed potatoes, the twin plum-puddings, cheese cakes, and dessert, including specially chosen bonbons that among other things Lisl and Lili Wach had sent me. As the former wrote: "With such poor little means thy living try to console thee for thy dead." Christmas Eve, the real German festival day, I had spent at S. Francesco, where the children provoked me by foolish gloating over their presents, while Hildebrand, who loathed these occasions, sat apart, bored and friendly.

Meanwhile I was almost crippled . . . and Rhoda was dead. This was the Italy I had looked forward to with such longing! — a place that a first great sorrow made all the more intolerable because of the beauty I saw with my eyes but could not feel. At that time I hated and feared life, passionately envying a nature like Hildebrand's that accommodated itself to the senselessness of it all, and just because it was senseless and inevitable didn't care. Almost nightly I dreamed of my dead friend, dreams such as this: She was declared to be dying, but I knelt beside the bed and said: "Listen; I shall go away tomorrow, and if I tell you I shall be coming back again in a month, you know you *cannot* die till I do!" and she answered with the old amused gleam in her eye: "Of course I can't; that's rather a good idea — go by all means." And then I would awake, as

tens of thousands awake nightly while the earth is turning smoothly round the sun, asking myself: "How can I bear this?" The only key that opens a way out of the torture-house, acceptance, seemed lost for ever. "Will talking of Rhoda," I asked Lisl, "ever be like talking of last year's toothache?" That question I can answer now; speaking for myself, certain tragedies in one's life can be put away, not thought of hardly for years if you choose it shall be so; but the moment you let your mind dwell on them the old ache comes back, and is mastered by weapons Time has put into your hands. One gets over everything . . . and nothing.

I spent two months of that spring of 1883 either in bed or on the sofa. For three weeks the kind Hildebrands insisted on having me at S. Francesco, and being mercifully seized — at last — by a mania that seizes all sooner or later, I read forty-two volumes on Napoleon, fervently blessing Vieusseux, the best lending library in the world. Also I painted a good deal from nature and did caricatures, in which pursuits, strange to say, Hildebrand took great interest. Once I elaborated a theory which he disputed of the laws that govern the perspective of cloisters, drawing many diagrams to prove it; and one of my most cherished possessions is a diagram under which I made him write over his signature: "*Ethel hat doch Recht gehabt!*" (Ethel was right after all.) Knowing how he wriggled out of or forgot things afterwards, I thought well to take precautions.

The progress of my acquaintance with Julia was slow and not even sure, one step forward generally meaning two steps back. Visits were strictly rationed on the scale of one per fortnight. She rationed everything. For instance, having learned that Rossetti was her favourite poet and constant solace, I was surprised to find on examining the two volumes of his poems, which she had had a year to my certain knowledge, that the second was intact and of the first only six pages cut; but she explained that she liked her pleasures in small doses. And when I remarked that at that rate it would take her seven years to get through *The House of Life* only, she replied: "So much the better!" Such was her tempo, and it may be imagined how it suited mine. I also noticed that the simplest reactions of human nature seemed incomprehensible to her till she had stated them to herself in terms of metaphysics . . . after that all was clear — now she held the clue!

Yet I remember one little scene that made one ask oneself whether this aloofness from things human was not part of a deliberate scheme, whether there were not other possibilities, severely held in check. Physically as mentally the last word of distinction, she was more striking-looking in a strange way of her own than pretty; but one evening she presented such a ravishing appearance in a new gown that Hildebrand, though not of an inflammable disposition and disciplined by a morbidly jealous wife, was quite in love with her for the moment. And behold the dignified Julia blushing and embarrassed like a schoolgirl! Finally, when I played a Scotch reel, Hildebrand began dancing about before her — the primitive form of love-making I believe — and oh, wonder! suddenly she rose and began dancing too! . . . Pallas Athena cutting capers with a Satyr! When I afterwards described the scene to Lisl she listened in awe-struck silence without a smile.

By the time spring was really on us I became able to hobble about a little with a stick, and was borne up steps of churches by a Herculean Frimhurst friend, Arthur Somerset, then amateur champion heavy-weight boxer of England. He refused to strip for Hildebrand's benefit, but had no objection to prancing about the studio in a long mustard-coloured ulster, delivering knock-out blows to imaginary opponents. Hildebrand, who delighted in the English, was in ecstasies, laughing undisguisedly while the boxer gravely finished his round, and afterwards he used often to say: "Where outside England could you produce a fellow like the champion boxer?" At that time Arthur, fresh from the Colonies, fell in love with every woman he saw, and it would have been unkind to leave me out. There was also a Swiss painter whose physical development and amorous susceptibility almost equalled Arthur's; he also rushed up and down church steps with me in his arms — more in muscular than sentimental rivalry I fancy, but with the same tender results. In fact, thanks to that sprain and consequent helplessness, I was for the first time in my life a pronounced success with the other sex.

Other things I recall in connection with that first winter in Florence, during which time my work forged ahead as never before, are being met on the Piazza S^a Maria Novella by a man with about twenty crocodiles which he addressed as *bimbi* (children), and

who, when asked: "*Si domani questi animali?*" replied: "*Nosignora, non sono punti animali domestici*" ("Can these animals be tamed?") "No, madame, they are not at all domestic animals"). Also that dear Reuss turned up, and Hildebrand instantly noticed that whereas in restaurants, where he paid for himself, he generally ordered cold ham and a glass of beer, at S. Francesco his appetite was such as to amaze even the children, who, thinking perhaps of ogres, asked their mother if all princes ate like that. Often and often had the Herzogenbergs and I been amused at this very *durchlauchtige* trait.

How we made music that spring! . . . playing every chamber work we could cope with, on Busch's immortal principle:

*"Es ist zur wahren Haus Musik
Der Muth mehr nöthig als Geschick."*¹

With Brahms I had of course no success, both Hildebrand and Julia being stubbornly refractory — as was also H. B., who came back a few weeks before I left Florence and with many qualms became our cellist. He actually began taking lessons again of his old master, Sbolci, the great local star, and one day when he did extra well, and I kept on exclaiming from the piano: "Sbolci!!" he thought I was saying "*Spoiled G!*" — a mistake which was not cleared up till many years later, for at the time he was too upset to refer to the incident.

And now my dislike of his mentality began to yield to interest, as he proceeded to open up a mind hitherto hermetically sealed to the Latin race. In spite of my mother's leanings the only countries that counted for me were England and Germany, and no John Bull ever held more foolish notions as to French superficiality and moral instability — a confession it costs me something to make even thirty years after conversion. It was H. B. who first persuaded me to study Flaubert, Baudelaire, and Verlaine seriously, introduced me to Anatole France, and kindled a flame of enthusiasm for French literature generally that was an endless subject of dispute between me and Lisl — both by letter² and otherwise. On that rock, however, I beat in vain; there is no bridging the gulf between Latin and Teutonic

¹ "For music-making in the home, courage is more requisite than skill."

² Appendix, pp. 361-2, No. 11, No. 12.

civilization, and her aversion to French poetry is common to all Germans, though few of them express it as frankly and forcibly as she did.

Just before I left Florence, news came that the Brewsters' château near Grenoble, a grand old pile made habitable by them at great expense, had been burned to the ground. Julia, the superwoman, was overwhelmed, and remained invisible for two or three days, but the bearing of H. B. was a revelation to me; he took it as one might take the loss of an old cigarette-holder. It was understood, my Italy having been a failure owing to my lameness, that I was to come back in the autumn, and early in July I left for Berchtesgaden, where the Herzogenbergs were building a little house, and which lay on the road to my real destination — a Bavarian village called Aibling, where there was a primitive but well-spoken-of mud-bath cure.

At Berchtesgaden I had a Wiedersehen with my friends that effaced all memories of the Venice fiasco, he being delighted with my musical output, and she, whose letters had given me a foretaste of the old tender comradeship, apparently bent on bringing its enduringness home to me.

In connection with my adoring reverence for Julia an amusing little psychological study awaited me; now for the first time a slight tinge of criticism crept into Lisl's appreciation of her wonderful sister. On one point we saw eye to eye. The home life at Frimhurst had always been warm and human, and though, as the demon Brandt child at Leipzig had remarked, I was not fond of small children, I did not like to see them excluded from the general scheme as they were in *Via de' Bardi*. As for other aspects of life in the Ivory Tower, I discovered that Lisl had but vague notions as to the exact tenets of her strange relations, and above all seemed wholly unacquainted with the Julia I knew, my account of whose opinions and points of view seemed to produce a bewildering effect on her mind. This was not surprising. The Brewsters were not apostles of their own creed, least of all among the Gentiles, and apart from her dislike of conflicts Lisl would shrink from discussions that might chill the warm temperature she longed for in that quarter. But in face of my admiring trumpeting forth of their gospel it was difficult to shirk com-

ment, particularly on the burning subject of the marriage bond. She realized, and slightly resented, their gentle ridicule of her own simple, instinctive views, would stoutly defend them, and, like Frau Hildebrand, maintained that when it comes to the point, everybody, no matter what his theories may be, feels exactly like the *concierge* and his wife. Still there was no denying the fact that neither of her relations could be called instinctive and simple, and she had nothing to oppose to my amused and rather scornful refrain: "But — you don't *know* them!" In short our conversations on the Brewster mentality, as regards this particular point at least, led to nothing and, as they evidently rather distressed her, were not persisted in. After all, as she said, there was little likelihood of these fantastic theories of theirs ever being put to the test, so we left it at that.

Meanwhile I pottered about, my leg being still leaden, and incidentally got through a good deal of sketching; but the great event of that sojourn in Berchtesgaden was that now for the first time I made real friends with Madame Schumann.

It all began over a conversation about her old friend Livia Frege, to whom, though she saw her faults, she was deeply attached. I always thought neither of the Herzogenbergs appreciated Frau Livia properly, and at that moment she was quite in Lisl's black books because of an absurd incident that had happened in Leipzig that spring. All three of them were dining at the Wachs' when it came out that this was the fiftieth anniversary of Livia's first appearance as concert singer, and presently Herzogenberg rose to bring the usual toast. He was a delightful speaker, graceful, witty, and human, but at times absent-minded, and alas! when the critical moment arrived, the name honoured ones there present were begged to celebrate was not Frau Frege but — Frau Wach! Of course everyone laughed, but Livia's was *le rire jaune*. Though a great artist, and now a great lady, she took speeches with the seriousness of the *bourgeoise* she was by birth and early associations, and all the evening sarcastic allusions to his little slip — uttered of course in a laughing way — rained on poor Herzogenberg. This Lisl thought both stupid and ungracious, which of course it was; and when Frau Schumann pleaded her old friend was like that, Lisl maintained it was a great pity to be like

that; in short, the discussion became heated. And as I entirely agreed with Frau Schumann's remarks about spots on the sun, and not only admired but really loved Frau Livia, a strong wave of sympathy set in from that hour.

With all her sixty-odd years Frau Schumann was more a child than any of us, and up to that time, as she afterwards confessed, the new element in the life of her beloved Lisl had rather upset her. But once Frau Schumann accepted you it was generously done. I had written a little *Prelude and Fugue for Thin People*, thus styled because the hands crossed rapidly and continually, deeply invading each other's territory. This piece she was determined to study, and when I gently demurred, from modesty of course, she flared up in her own peculiar fashion with: "*Aber so stark bin ich doch nicht!*" ("I'm not as fat as all that!") — a phrase that gave play to that endearing little lisp of hers. Her daughters reported her as completely engrossed in this athletic problem, murmuring to herself amidst her struggles: "*Gehen muss es aber!*" ("It *must* be managed!") and in the end it was dedicated to her, title and all, by special request. She had visited England regularly for nearly half a century, but all the English she knew was "Alright!" spoken as one word and thrown into her German haphazard, as often as not inappropriately. One day, fancying I had offended her, I sent over an apologetic note to her lodging, and presently back came a card with "ALRIGHT!" written on it, for once applied as intended. Another time I found her examining a sketch I had made of the fine old cloisters at Berchtesgaden, the colour effect of which I was rather pleased with; after a painful silence she remarked: "But surely those cloisters are not all blue and yellow like an Austrian bank note?" She then hastily added: "But what do I know about painting? nothing at all!" and I had to assure and reassure her that I was not at all hurt.

There is one charming Frau Schumann story of this period — a conversation Herzogenberg overheard while I was at Berchtesgaden — which I hope has never found its way into print; anyhow an English version must be prefaced by the remark that in Germany crochets, quavers, and semiquavers are called fourths, eighths, and sixteenths. In the Schumann household the eldest daughter, Marie, did the accounts, and one day she suddenly asked (I must give the German first): "*Mama, wieviel gabst du mir soeben? — ein und ein*

fünftel Mark, nicht wahr?" The astonished reply was: "*Aber Kind, besinn' dich doch! Fünftel giebt's ja nicht, blos viertel, achtel, und sechszehntel!*" ("Mama, what did you give me just now? one mark and a fifth, wasn't it?" — "But, child, reflect! There are no such things as fifths, only fourths, eighths, and sixteenths.") This anecdote, together with the one about Joachim and the metronome, looks as if music and arithmetic don't go together.

I always think with amusement of one of Frau Schumann's unexpected little rages, because one so often suffers under the cause oneself. Two or three of her humble satellites had followed her to Berchtesgaden, much encouraged thereto by her daughters, who found their mother's holiday passion for cards excessive; and one day, just as they had started a game of skat, one of the satellites observed that if they had thought of it they might have played dummy-whist instead. "There!" cried Frau Schumann, "if there is one thing I abominate it is people who as soon as you have settled down to one game suggest another, or when you are going to play one piece ask for some other piece. . . . *Ach! diese ungergelten Geister!*" (these undisciplined spirits!), and so on, till her wrath died down in Lisl's peals of laughter. It wasn't everyone however who had Lisl's courage and could carry it off; in other company the air was often thunderous for quite a long time after one of these outbursts, till suddenly the thunderer herself came forth with her indescribably beautiful smile from behind the clouds, and all was well. These are the faults that endear people to you almost more than their virtues.



CHAPTER XXXI. *Summer 1883 to December 1883*

I ONLY stayed a short time at Berchtesgaden, the pressing matter being to get my leg cured, and departed for Aibling with a half-promise from the Herzogenbergs to join me there later. And it was further arranged that on my way back to Italy in the late autumn I should stay with the Schumanns at Frankfurt. . . . O glory!

Aibling, like all places where you have finally got rid of a haunting terror — for Johnny's fate had been much in my mind, as in my mother's — is a loved recollection. But for a diminutive Kurhaus it was an enchanting, absolutely primitive village, cut in two by a couple of clear brown streams running parallel to each other, and spanned every hundred yards or so by wooden bridges — and at the back of beyond was a most rugged threatening-looking section of the Alps. I gathered from the station-master that accommodation was scarce and humble, and went off to the only place he could suggest, the one hotel being of course beyond my means. Finding no one in the passage, I knocked at the door of what seemed to be the *gute Stube*, and receiving no answer, opened it with a polite: "May I come in?" to find myself in presence of three cows. Presently a young female farm hand advanced out of the gloom and showed me the room they were in the habit, so she said, of letting. The chest of drawers, I was told, belonged to *der Mutter* and were filled with her *Kram* (old stays, bodices, and hobbles for the cows) — in fact the only drawer that could be put at my disposal was in the base of the sofa-bed, a thing without head or tail-board, higher in the centre too than at the ends, so that one's pillows were generally on the floor. There was one cup in the house but no saucer, one knife, one fork, and some glasses, all of which were produced as a great favour from the mother's cupboards. I lived in that house three whole days. The peasant (that is, *die Mutter*) waited on me with a baby on one arm, while a soprano of the third-rate Italian kind sang wildly in the Kurhaus opposite, practising for a concert. And to crown all, a place which shall be nameless was in the cows' drawing-room. When I moved on elsewhere I stuck to the peasant as *masseuse* because of her powerful *Technik*, which she accounted for by saying: "*Ich bin ja recht viel mit dem lieben Viech umgegangen*" ("I have had much truck with the dear beasts").

My next visit was to the doctor, who turned out to be a born healer though not of the Harley Street type. He lived in an ancient little house all gables and corners, with a beautiful sundial and motto painted on it; and as once more nobody responded to my knockings I walked straight into an old-fashioned room, full of worm-eaten carved furniture, good taste, and dirt. Seated at a St. Jerome-like table, in the midst of the litter characteristic of that saint, was a

man with filthy hands, muddy riding boots, rusty spurs, and a blue-eyed intelligent face, who had lost his voice and spoke, in a hoarse whisper, a dialect that puzzled even his German patients. I at once saw he knew all about my case, and went off with the loan of an electric battery, evidently home-made and coated with oil and peat mud. To cut a long story short, he and the baths cured me completely in three weeks, but for a shrunk muscle which had yet to be expanded by exercise.

I spent an exquisite August there, learning quantities of Rossetti by heart while under treatment; and one evening, following one of the little rivers up a rocky valley, laughing young voices rang out, and round the corner I came upon some twenty naked youths, bathing, skylarking, and chasing each other among the trees. Here at last was a bit of old Greece . . . and it was my miserable duty to walk on hurriedly looking the other way! . . . By and by friends turned up, a certain Lord and Lady P. They had just been with my mother and Mary at Aix, where he had vainly wooed my lovely sister with costly gifts, including a beautiful fan — declined scornfully by her but gladly accepted by me. As I said before, my old Whig friend's advice never to refuse a good offer had been followed ever since.

After the P.'s left, by a wonderful bit of luck I came in for one of the village ceremonies that still survive in Catholic Alpine districts, the consecration of the "Aibling Veteran Society's" new banner. No fewer than fifty-seven societies attended this festival with thirteen bands. At their head marched a magnificent peasant girl dressed like a *vivandière* (I wish I had asked why) followed by twenty Aibling virgins in white muslin and blue ribbons, whose twenty self-conscious, stuck-up-looking countenances shone blowsily beneath flowery wreaths. All the women and most of the men wore gorgeous old peasant costumes, and as the procession wound among the little bridges, crossing and re-crossing the rivulets to the sound of Volkslieder beautifully played, I could have wept that, knowing nothing of the festival, I had not urged the Herzogenbergs to come one day sooner. When they did arrive they fell head over ears in love with the place, as I had promised them they would, and a week later I started for England, happier than I had been for months.

I went home via Rothenburg an der Taube, then little known, but a place most people interested in mediæval towns have visited since. Conrad Fiedler, who had never been there, wrote a scoffing letter about my enthusiasm; how, he asked, can anyone who has seen Italian architecture rave about German Gothic? — a point of view I never could understand. Meanwhile I envied Bavaria a form of government that enabled her King to forbid the modernization of Rothenburg, and thought with a pang of certain factories on the outskirts of Hildesheim — not to speak of Chester.

How the sadness of that return to England came back to me the other day, when, passing through Frimhurst, which is to let, I sought and found traces of the big "R.G." Rhoda had carved in the beech tree opposite the schoolroom window! Of course my first visit was to Rustington, my first walk to the churchyard. Nothing wrings the heart more sharply than remembering the jokes of a recently lost friend; as I laid on the grave a wreath I had made of the heather and many-tinted ferns she had admired round Frimhurst just a year ago, it flashed across me that she had once said I handled flowers as if I were buckling up the straps of a harness! . . . In the hall her coat was still hanging, her stick still standing in its old place, and her favourite dog had learned, as dogs will, not to miss her. . . . On her writing-table was a caricature I had drawn of myself going away in a rage from the Parrys', because he wouldn't play me Beethoven's Opus III when I wanted him to, and under it written in her strange, strong handwriting: "Ethel, the versatile wax statue, going away from Knight's Croft." . . . And the beach without her . . . and the hopeless bewilderment of a first great sorrow relived on the spot where you had been so happy! . . . Of Agnes, who carried on Rhoda's work and responsibilities, and is alive now to see their fruition, I will only say that grief such as hers makes me half ashamed to have spoken so much of my own.

The Frimhurst situation I came home to this time was, if anything, more fantastic than ever. I lit upon a tragicomic letter to Lisl describing it in full: the unutterable jollity of the young ones; the chatter at the breakfast table, which always fascinated me afresh; the ever-recurring financial crises; Papa's announcement that in *two or*



Clara Schumann, 1876

three years (!) we must let Frimhurst; Mother's tears at this prospect; her countless new and gorgeous gowns; my estimate of their cost; and finally the abstention of us younger ones from butter and sugar — an attempt at bringing moral weight to bear on our parents which entirely missed fire. We children thought they must love our home less than we did, otherwise surely they would take action, but of course it was the common shrinking of minds no longer young and elastic from drastic resolutions. As I explained to Lisl, who enquired why the mother I so much admired let things slide in this way, the force of her character exhausted itself in moments, and she was not good at sustained effort; but I am glad to say I added: "Yet oh! what a *ganzer Kerl* (real good sort) she is, and how thoroughly I approve of her!" Well I might.

That summer I recall a little incident that illustrates how quick and kind she could be. Some exceedingly high and mighty people of the "nice" set had come to tea, and suddenly there entered, much to our horror, a gawky adolescent, son of neighbours such as everyone who lives in the country has to cope with — gentlefolk in their own estimation and engaged in a severe struggle to establish the fact. My mother was always wonderfully kind to the parents of this youth, who on this occasion remarked, as he advanced towards her, wiping his hands on an unpleasant-looking handkerchief: "Excuse me, but I suffer from warm hands." The high and mighty ones looked unutterable things, but my mother, cordially shaking the sticky paw, said at once: "I know you suffer from a very warm *heart*!" . . . How rude she was sometimes — for instance when she considered her daughters' admirers treated her "like a cipher" — but how dear and delightful she could be when she chose.

There was an unusually dramatic carriage adventure soon after my return. The "quiet" horse, Dandy, reared as some soldiers were marching by, fell backwards alongside the cart, and lay there plunging. One of the officers, who turned out to be our friend Lord William Seymour, was off his horse and on Dandy's head in a second, but the animal was so entangled in traces and straps that it took a company of guardsmen half an hour to set him free. After which Papa, the reins wound as usual round his weak, gouty wrists, drove quietly home, as if nothing had happened. That made, so the others said, four accidents in five weeks; and I may add that when my

mother was involved she was not in the least alarmed, only provoked, thinking such scenes ridiculous and rather unseemly. What with our stable adventures, and the fact that we were still exceeding our income by about two hundred a year, yet going on as usual, no wonder Uncle Charles maintained with more emphasis than ever that "the Irish strain predominated." On the other hand some of our sporting visitors found our ways quite to their taste, and once an old friend of ours, Henry Allfrey of the 60th Rifles, remarked to a brother officer: "I always spend Sunday afternoon at Frimhurst — they're ready to ride the pig or shoot the cow or anything."

In the autumn I met for the first time the Empress Eugénie, who after the death of the Prince Imperial had settled at Farnborough, and since 1883 has been the most wonderful friend to me and mine. I remember saying to the Duchesse de Mouchy that it was hard to believe that she could ever have been more beautiful than now, and the reply was: "I think in some ways she is more beautiful now than when she was young, because years and sorrow have done away with the accidents of beauty — youth itself for instance, and colouring — and revealed the exquisiteness of design." And as first impression another incident may be recorded — a very characteristic one. A fat middle-aged Jewess of vast possessions, whose elaborate red-gold wig indicated what the colour of her hair may have been in her youth, and who possibly had resembled the Empress in other respects some twenty-five or thirty years ago (which she proclaimed to the world was the case), informed her hostess over the tea-table at Farnborough Hill that she was constantly being taken for her in London. A thrill of secret horror and amusement ran through the assembled company, but the Empress's rejoinder, innocent of the faintest tinge of secret irony, was: "*Mais c'est très flatteur pour moi, madame, puisque je suis bien plus âgée que vous*" — the first of innumerable lessons in good manners one was to learn in that school.

October and November of that year I spent in the North with Alice and Mary. At Muirhouse, the old Davidsons' adorable place on the Firth of Forth where Alice and Harry lived in the summer, many of the happiest days of my life have been passed; there too, especially after she and my brother-in-law settled there permanently,

I really got to know Alice, of whom I had seen far less in my youth than of my special pal and contemporary, Mary. Though the Firth is not quite the sea, it is the next best thing, and a beautiful wood ran down the cliff right to the beach. Mrs. Davidson remains for me the perfect type of Scotch gentlewoman, and for some strange reason, since no one would have expected it, this gentle, tall, stately lady was fond of me — perhaps because I was so devoted to her. Her husband on the contrary was tiny, vivacious, witty, and versatile, and but for his essential Scotchness might almost have been a Latin; in contact with these two I first became aware that theirs is the branch of the Anglo-Saxon race I most admire. They all loved music and beauty generally, and would listen for hours to soft Brahms and Schubert songs, but when I tried them with Bach's Organ Toccata in D Major, Mr. Davidson ran away, saying that sort of music sounded best in the next room.

He was an inimitable teller of Scotch stories, and one of these, though perhaps it is well known, I must do my best to preserve, because I so often use it against foreigners who declare there is only one vowel in the English language. The dialogue takes place between a salesman of woollen goods (A), and a customer who is testing them between his finger and thumb (B). With many apologies to Scotland, I shall endeavour to spell phonetically and give a translation.

<i>Original</i>	<i>Translation</i>
A: Ooh?	Wool?
B: Eye, ooh.	Yes, wool.
A: Ah ooh?	All wool?
B: Eye, ah ooh.	Yes, all wool.
A: Ah eh ooh?	All one wool?
B: Eye, ah eh ooh.	Yes, all one wool.

After this, the foreign interlocutor is generally too flustered to object that these are Scotch, not English vowels.

Though the two dear brothers-in-law, Harry Davidson and Charlie Hunter, are dead, their wives are alive, so I will only say about them that it always makes me happy to know I was a favourite sister-in-law of Harry's, and that to Charlie, a great man to hounds, I owe my chief joy that year and in many years to come, for he mounted me when-

ever the hunting season found me in England. That November a String Quintet of mine, which was to be produced in Leipzig early in the New Year, was in course of rehearsal there, and Lisl wrote, only half in fun: "I believe you think more of how that wonderful horse jumps than how I like the new third movement!" — a charge that our correspondence, in which every bar of that Quintet is discussed again and again, amply disproves; but the irritation at my passion for sport continued long after she had ceased to fear it might crowd out a nobler passion.

It was in connection with this Quintet that I began, if not to dislike, yet rather to distrust Joachim. Longing that my mother should hear something of mine, and considering that what was good enough for Leipzig was good enough for London, I begged Lisl to suggest his playing it at St. James's Hall; all the more since when it had suited his book, if I may use the expression, he often produced works far less ripe than mine. But Joachim beat about the bush, said he preferred a Quartet which he knew I didn't think much of, and which as a matter of fact I had torn up, and the end of it was — nothing at all. I had no ambition whatever as regards England then, but I did want my mother to have a great pleasure — something to show for all the bother I had caused them. She was wildly excited about this Quintet being produced, and would persist in talking about my "success," as she called it, to all sorts of kind bores, who then of course talked about it to me, and I longed to brain them all. All my life I have hated no word as I hate that vulgar, meretricious word "success." I tried my hardest not to snub dear Mother, and she herself was more than satisfied with me that summer, writing to me afterwards with characteristic generosity that I had been "an angel"! But knowing how otherwise angelic one could be with people far less dearly loved but who never rubbed you up the wrong way, as usual I felt helplessly guilty towards her in my heart when the time came for crossing the Channel again.

CHAPTER XXXII. *December 1883 to Spring 1884*

THIS time my route to Italy lay over Frankfurt, where the Schumanns had lived for some years. Every detail of that visit — from the colour of the music-room curtains to the subdued creaking of the front door, which, according to my hostess, defeated every joiner in the town — lives in my memory; nevertheless, having come across two letters of mine to Lisl fresh from the mint, one written under the sacred roof, the other in the train for Munich, I shall let these speak for me.

(1)

At Frau Schumann's!!! December 1883.
My Darling, — It really has come true! I am under Frau Schumann's roof at last and in spite of the awfulness of it am wildly happy. I really meant to stay only two days but then dear kind Frau S. proposed doing the Quintet tomorrow and my staying till Monday. As that fell through I proposed going tomorrow (Sunday). This she wouldn't have, so I stay till Monday after all. As ill-luck would have it I was out both yesterday and today at her practising time, but this evening she is sure to play.

The first day she and I went off to hear *Lakmé* by Delibes, and when we got there found it was to be *Martha*. I had never heard the opera, and she not for a long time, and we *were* so amused. How young and *unblasirt* ¹ she is! Yesterday we two went to the Museum concert, an awful programme; a Saint-Saëns symphony, another novelty of an awful description, Arie out of the *Meistersinger* and *Euryanthe*, sung by the "exquisite" Götz, and . . . thank God for all His mercies . . . the G moll of Mozart. Sitting next us was Frau Viardot, such a bright clever-looking woman, with a personal and professional friendship for Saint-Saëns, on which account Frau Schumann, who of course hated the symphony, endeavoured to control her feelings. Do you know that symphony? It begins with a passage for solo flute or clarinet, something like this, or worse [*here follows a musical quotation*] and seeing Frau Schumann's face — horror, resignation, politeness, renewed horror, chasing each other across it — I began to laugh so dreadfully that I didn't know how to hide it. You can imagine how comic it all was, but I was full of admiration for her patience and consideration of Frau Viardot's feelings. . . . I get on very well with Marie and Eugenie ² and

¹ The reverse side of *blasée*.² Frau Schumann's daughters.

find the latter as attractive on further acquaintance as I did at first, but I think both their minds want poking up; they give out so very little of what is in them. At home they are charming with her, or it is their humour to be so now. I like to hear Eugenie chaff her, as yesterday when Frau S. said she always read the papers and Eugenie said: "*Ja, Mama, doch nur die Mordsgeschichten*" [Yes, Mama, but only the murder cases]. And oh! the funny, half-vexed, half-amused face with which she protested: "*Nein, Kind, warum denn gar die Mordsgeschichten? Wie kannst du denn so was sagen?*" [Nay, child, why then the murder cases? How canst thou say such a thing?] Do you know I have actually stopped being frightened of her. . . . They are calling to me to go out with them! . . . Heavens! I am late! More tomorrow. . . .

(2)

In the train to Munich.

. . . I am dreadfully sorry to leave Frankfurt but so happy to have had the privilege of being there. I wish I could make Frau Schumann see that. She would go on about "*wir haben Ihnen doch so wenig anbieten können*" [we have been able to do so little to amuse you] and it is so difficult for such as me to tell her without its seeming mere phrases what it is to one being in that house. And, do you know, the feeling of unaccustomed awe and reverence — so unlike what I have for anyone else — clogs me; and I feel a difficulty that never bothers me otherwise in expressing what I feel. I am perpetually reviewing our respective situations and thinking what a wretched object I am compared with her, and how I'd like to do something desperate for her; and so on in the most fruitless fashion. She played me the A minor fugue this morning. I think I care more for her Bach playing than anyone's in this world — Oh, I forgot Brahms! I was thinking of Rubinstein, etc.

With the girls I get on admirably, Marie quite transformed, so lively and jolly. They are very funny together and find me more than comic, so we amuse each other well. Our start for the party that evening was very funny. Eugenie nearly pulled Frau S.'s cap off wrapping her up, and then when the cab came it was so small we could hardly get into it, and Marie was in a fury and saying: "*Nein, da bleib' ich doch zehnmal lieber zu Haus*" [No, if it comes to that, I'd ten times rather stay at home] as if she had been doing anything but grumble all day at having to go. And then she and Frau S. abused the cab-driver in a tragic tone I cannot describe, but which you, knowing the people, can well imagine, for having so small a cab, and he privately informed me it was not his fault if four such unusually stout people (me stout!!) got in at once. I

laughed so at the whole thing, as did Eugenie, that they ended by laughing too and we had a jolly evening; and Frau Schumann played the E major Paganini study and *Warum* and some other little pieces so divinely and looked so beautiful that if I tried to hold forth about it I should assuredly fall into "excess." Y. Z. sang weakly and charmingly, and he and I and Eugenie sat at a *Katzen Tisch*³ and were very jolly, and sending Frau Schumann and Marie home stayed on ourselves and played idiotic games and the fool generally. I was so sorry F. left before I came; I do like her much, with her clown's pathos and nice eyes and shyness of Frau Schumann. . . . Well you see, I am just as unreasonable about Frau S. as ever, and did she do wrong and you catechize me about it should vex you as much as ever, for I feel her faults without even wishing she had not got them — I am perfectly indifferent to them and cannot bother even to think of them. As nature she is the most wonderful, delightful experience I know and I simply bask in it and try to make it more and more my own. I will write from Munich, my darling, and tell you about the Fiedlers. Oh how I long to be settled and at work again!

Your E.

This longing was not to be satisfied immediately, for while staying with the Fiedlers at Munich I developed a mysterious illness which probably was rheumatic fever. Anyhow I at once became delirious and broke the "German Record for Fever survived by the Patient" — a speciality as many subsequent illnesses proved, and it is pleasant to excel in any line. Dreading something infectious I entreated to be taken to the hospital, but this they would not hear of, and again I said to myself what wonderful friends were mine, though the one nearest to me in many ways by temperament, the one who understood everything instinctively and without cavilling, was dead. For ten days my head was enveloped in ice and could not be touched, and as I had gone to bed with my hair, which was long and thick, in a loose pigtail, there seemed nothing for it but to cut it off — a distressing necessity. But Fate intervened in the person of Mary's mother, who with the aid of oil, a mackintosh cover, and infinite patience accomplished the miracle of disentanglement after exactly three days of almost ceaseless toil. In the second week of the New Year I started for Florence, quite well though skin and bone, my

³ A little side table that Germans call the Cat's Table.

Quintet having meanwhile been performed in Leipzig, as may be read in an admirable letter from Lisl on criticism.⁴

On the journey I fell in with an old English friend — a widow, deeply religious on ultra-Protestant lines, whose husband used to beat her. She had often told me her greatest grief was knowing for certain that he was now in Hell, so it was astonishing to learn she intended doing a round of Italian churches, praying in each to be reunited with him as soon as possible. When I related this incident to Hildebrand he remarked as usual: "Where, I ask you, could one find a widow like that except in England?" I again took up my abode in Via dei Serragli, where nothing was changed except that Amey was now studying art elsewhere. My landlady, finally despairing of tips from furtive male visitors, stole my best boots first thing. After this exploit, with an idea perhaps of making me forget a rash offer to pay for them herself, she took to sticking bunches of violets in rickety wineglasses on my overcrowded writing-table; also to screaming "*chi è?*" in the passage, as proof of vigilance, whenever the door-bell rang. Implored to abandon this ear-splitting practice, she remarked it would be the Signorina's own fault if more things were stolen, and shrugged her shoulders with a wry smile when I meaningly said I would take the risk. She was an old rip, as my father would have put it, but I think of her with sympathy — if only because one day, when I dropped three things in rapid succession, she remarked while picking them up: "*Bella cosa che la terra ferma tutto!*" (It's lucky that the ground stops everything).

That spring in Italy more than made up for the previous year's failure. I worked as never before and contrived between whiles, alone and happy, to see most of the principal Umbrian towns; also Rome, where, the lodging of my desires being owned by a hairdresser who declared he never let rooms, inspiration prompted me to let down my hair, whereupon he gave in at once. In Hildebrand vein I ask, where except in Italy could you find a landlord like that?

An exquisite trait in the Italians, the only race I am uncritically in love with, is this easy response to a human touch, a certain closeness to nature which welds all ranks together at the base. Their heads may be in different social strata, but the feet of all are on that

⁴ Appendix, p. 360, No. 8.

rock. In spite of imperious authority on the one side and unbounded reverence on the other, my old friend of later years, that greatest of great ladies Donna Laura Minghetti, treated her butler and was treated by him as an equal at bottom, and it is the same throughout Italian society. That very spring I am writing about, thanks to my one aristocratic friend, the Dowager Duchess of Sermoneta (*née* Ellis), who took me to all sorts of otherwise invisible villas, I was privileged to see a certain fat Marchesa, bearer of an historic name, rating her gardener so furiously that apoplexy seemed imminent, when the old man gently put his hand on her arm and said: "*But figlia mia*, peas won't grow in the open in February." My very first essay in shopping the year before had given me a taste of the quality I mean, to which I owe as many twinges of delight, walking the country, as to the scenery itself. They had told me that people who have a soul above haggling are looked upon by Italian shopkeepers as dull and unsportsmanlike, in fact that to buy anything without bargaining is equivalent to shooting a sitting pheasant. I bargained therefore over a certain teapot as keenly as my knowledge of the language allowed; suddenly it was put into my hands at my own price, with the remark: "Do me at least the pleasure to break it soon!" . . . And then the politeness of them, the serene disregard of red tape in post offices and other solemn places! At that time attempts were being made to bring home to the people the dangers of spitting, and noticing that this national custom was nevertheless in full swing, I once asked casually in an up-to-date hospital whether spitting was forbidden in the corridors. The answer was "*Sissignora: ma faccia pure il Suo comodo*" (Yes, madame, but don't let that inconvenience you). How I loved, how I love the Italians! . . .

I used to walk by night miles and miles along the Arno and once had a nightmare of an experience. On the narrow river path, hemmed in on the other side by impenetrable vineyard fences, I met a rough-looking man who stared and passed on. I am not nervous about tramps as a rule but this fellow was alarming — big, brutal-looking, with a slight suggestion of insanity. The moon was perpetually dodging in and out among rushing clouds, and looking back presently I saw the man had turned and was following me. I quickened

my pace and found he was doing the same. I began to run, so did he. I must have run for about a quarter of a mile and was in extreme physical distress, when a transient beam showed a break in the fence; I shot in and my pursuer overran the scent. Then I flew down a rough path and soon hit a road within sight of habitations. After that I always walked at night with a revolver, knowing that if I produced it tramps would think I was mad and leave me alone. (Whatever you do in Italy the explanation is: "*e pazza!*") These walks terrified Frau Hildebrand, but there was a vein of adventurousness in Julia (who, by the by, under the humanizing influence of H. B.'s presence was more approachable this year) which responded to unconventionality. She liked action in others as long as she herself was in no way involved.

In March Lisl had a very severe illness. Remembering Rhoda I was terror-stricken and begged to be allowed to start for Leipzig, but Herzogenberg wouldn't hear of it — said she was to be kept quiet and asked comically whether I really considered myself the right person? Bottom was their favourite character, and I promised "to roar an it were a nightingale," but all in vain, and to make it worse Julia remarked: "One must be *very well* to enjoy you." Sadly I wished, as often since, that one could combine the advantages of one's own temperament with those of someone else's.

That year there was a further crop of the Shakespere battles which abounded during the eighteen years of my friendship with H. B. (for I count from 1890, when we met again in England.) I had been swept away by Salvini's Othello, but unfortunately went to to see him as Lear, which, like all his rôles except Othello, was mere ranting. Still more unfortunately I found myself sitting next H. B. Many of Shakespere's plays got on his nerves and at that time he considered *King Lear* the work of a savage — an opinion held, privately, by many cultivated Frenchmen, as I have found out since. Later in life, weaned from exclusively Latin tastes in literature, I think he came to feel Shakespere differently; anyhow I know he considered *Hamlet* the finest play in existence. But if two great friends have a perennial quarrel on a given subject, neither ever gathers exactly what the other's opinion is, particularly if one of them gets exasperated, as I invariably did on that theme. In later years we made it a rule never to discuss Shakespere. . . .

The Fiedlers came to Florence in April, but the blend with the Brewsters was not quite a success, Mary not appealing to Julia, partly because of a quality of hers I delighted in — a touch of the peasant (“roughness” is a poor equivalent of the word that exactly expresses it, “*derbheit*”). I have a recollection of being with the Fiedlers by chance in some place where burghers were dancing, where we were bored and silent, and where she, who, like me, cared for the good things of life, suddenly exclaimed in broad Bavarian (it may have been a quotation but I never forgot it). “*Tanzen können wir nicht, reden und amüsant sein können wir auch nicht, aber Champagner trinken können wir schon, damit die Leut’ was zu schaun haben und sich ärgern*” (We can’t dance, we can’t talk and be amusing, but we *can* drink champagne, so that people may stare and feel cross). Whereupon she ordered two bottles. I owe to Fiedler a notable experience of German solemnity and lack of sense of humour — notable because connected with one of their demigods — for it was he who introduced me at Florence to the celebrated Roman historian Gregorovius. When I caught his name, I innocently said: “Why, I thought Gregorovius was an *ancient* Roman” upon which the great man turned on his heel and cut me ever after. Nowadays I might keep such a remark to myself, but surely it was very harmless?

Hildebrand was wild that year on portrait busts — his finest I think are of that period — and had talked of doing one of me, but the idea of sitting is always unwelcome to active people, and eventually he decided to take a cast of my face to start with. At the best of times this is a horrible experience; your hair is tied back with bandages, you are laid out on two chairs and swathed in sheets, your face is smeared with cold cream, your eyes sealed with clay, and quills are put up your nostrils and into your mouth. Then comes the plaster pouring, and your whole face is gradually buried under a wet weight of several pounds. I felt I was stifling and my heart bursting, but thought it was only nerves, for everyone present spoke in agitated whispers as at an operation. Then I lost consciousness, and came to to find the plaster had been hastily torn off by Hildebrand, his wife having noticed that my hands had turned green and that there was a bubble of blood at the end of one quill, the others having fallen out altogether. In fact I was suffocating. In spite of

her and Fiedler we started again, and the result was an appalling thing, wholly useless to work by, which ever after was called "Ethel's death mask." I was just off on a long-planned expedition, and for reasons which will be explained later the bust was never executed.



CHAPTER XXXIII. *Spring* 1884

AMONG many kindred experiences none floats more magically poetic on the horizon of my memory than the one I am about to relate. My scheme was to walk through the Casentino and across the Apennines into the Romagna, planning so as not to be more than two days' journey from the railway towards the end, in case funds should give out. In Italy you really can count on the weather, and my only luggage was a camel's hair Salzburg cape, a comb and toothbrush, a tiny bit of soap, an iron-shod stick, an Ordnance map, and a revolver. The bulk of my money, a piteous little sum of course, was stowed away in various hems. I had got up the country thoroughly beforehand, knew where I should strike monasteries, art treasures off the ordinary beat, and the best point for what I had set my heart on — a simultaneous view of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. For a fortnight I walked and scrambled in that noble landscape, passing from the delicate Casentino to rocky solitudes of a quite other order of sternness than anything I had seen in Switzerland. Sometimes you came upon a tiny group of human habitations huddled together in the unexpected greenness of a gorge; elsewhere not a soul was to be seen.

I generously timed myself to arrive about nightfall at some monastery, sleeping in the outhouse provided by monks for Woman the Leper, or sometimes I hit off the albergo (neither an inn not yet a pothouse) of a mountain village. Twice or thrice I slept in the open, under a jutting rock or behind a heap of sweet-smelling herb-shot hay, my cape rolled into a pillow, for the nights were almost as warm as the days and the only spell of chilliness was at sunset. But the

chief jewels in that little circle of precious memories are two incidents, one spiritual, the other temporal, that fell in the last two days of my wanderings.

I had spent a couple of nights in a certain monastery that clung like a limpet to a precipitous wall of rock; what the Order was I forget, but the monks' habit was white. The Prior was a short peasant, the expression on his round face a blend of shrewdness, childishness, and spirituality. Some first remark of his seemed to call for the explanation that I was a Protestant, whereupon he said gently: "The best Christian I have ever known was a Protestant — he helped me once in my youth when I had just joined the Order"; then he was silent, and I saw he was peacefully contemplating a past tragedy. One of those saints who without effort, and seemingly without intention, draw souls forth from their shells as the first warm day draws bodies out of their houses, that monk knew more about me in two days than many a confessor might learn about his regular penitents in a lifetime. I told him about my music, about the absorbing passion for sport and games, about Rhoda's death and the impossibility of bearing moral pain, about the pull of life and the constant longing for calm, the fascination of difficulties and barriers, the need of human contact and affection, the love of one's own ways — in short, all there was to tell of the *Lebensteufel* that so often bewildered and distressed Lisl. . . .

One can fancy what his commentary was — the old, old receipt for the peace that the world cannot give, the necessity of turning away from life, and, when trouble comes, of acceptance. (We met again that evening, I and that most difficult of words!) And once or twice he murmured, more to himself than to me: "It will take many years — yes, many, many for certain . . . but some day please God you will learn the lesson." On the second evening, the few francs I had tried to give him having been refused in accordance with the rules of the Order, I asked him in desperation how to repay them for their hospitality. A gleam of mischief came into his eye: "Well, if you like to give me fifty centesimi," he said, "that much I can accept with a good conscience if I say a few Masses for you . . . and I don't suppose you have any objection though you are not a Catholic." Then he added: "I should have mentioned you many times at the Sacrifice anyhow for nothing." . . . The last sight I had of him

was at five o'clock next morning, standing at the top of the rugged path that led to the valley three thousand feet below and once more crying, with uplifted hand: "*Figlia mia, figlia mia!* turn your back on life! — it is the only way."

Towards sunset I arrived at a little village from which a two hours' walk next morning would take me to the station in time to catch the train for Florence. My money was all gone and I was rather sad, for at the critical moment clouds had come up on the eastern horizon, and though I caught a shimmer of sea on the west, the Adriatic had remained invisible. Thus the chief object of the expedition had not been achieved, and certainly the Prior would not expect one to learn resignation in twelve hours. While I was waiting for supper, as indeed at the moment of my arrival, everyone was discussing what could have happened to the Signor Barone, so of course I asked who the Signor Barone might be. They pointed to one of those fantastic fortress-like villages, hamlet and castle combined, that cluster among Italian mountains — *that* was where the Signor Barone lived. It appeared he was a Florentine noble, who like the Prior had turned his back on the world — not from saintliness, but in order to live, year in, year out, the life of a hunter; a man who knew not fatigue, whose rifle brought down everything it was pointed at, who sometimes on his way from the chase honoured that establishment by passing the night there, and might now be expected any moment. Presently much rumbling of wheels, cracking of whips, and shouting sent everyone flying out into the yard, and in came five dogs, followed by a tall, bronzed, well-set-up man between forty-five and fifty — good-looking but for rather a red nose, and evidently a gentleman though a little run to seed. We saluted each other politely and I went on smoking cigarettes and devouring newspapers after the manner of people fresh from the wilds. Meanwhile the Barone sat down to a simple meal and ate as ravenously as I was reading, drinking his own wine, I noticed, which someone fetched out of a rough hunting-cart.

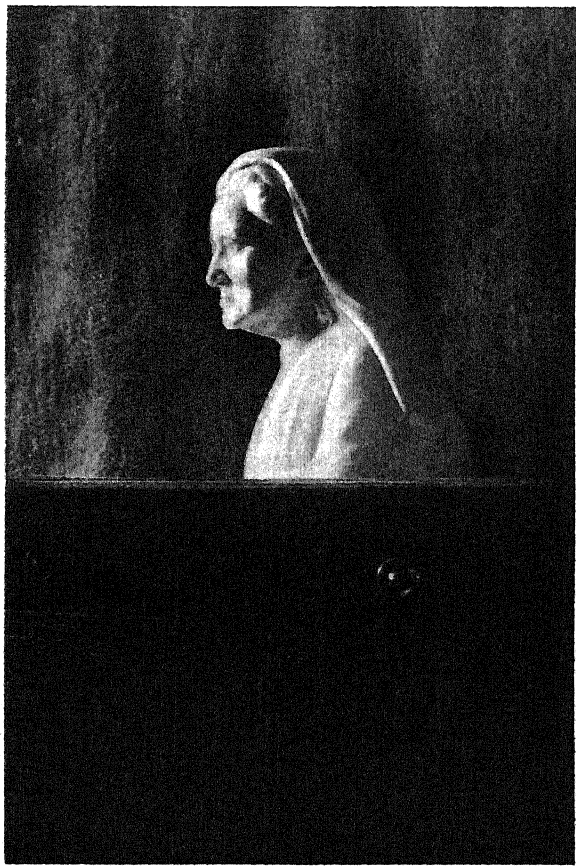
Presently he lit a perfect cigar of the brand H. B. patronized and we began to talk, passing through the divine weather to whatever may have been the European situation of the moment, and thence to personal topics. I told him I was an English girl wintering in Italy,

explained how I came to be in that village, how unfortunately I had missed the great view and had now concluded what was probably the most perfect experience life had to offer. He was greatly interested, especially in the Ordnance map and my red-inked route, which, as one who knew every inch of the country, its art treasures and beauties of every kind, he found well planned; indeed, it was pleasant to hear him abounding generally, in the Hildebrand sense, as to the merits of the Anglo-Saxon race. "But you *must* see the two seas," he cried, "it is one of the most curious sights in the world. Do try again; this wind is bringing up just the right weather." Whereupon I explained that I had come to the end of my cash and had no alternative but to go back whence I came. The Barone, who I saw had an idea in his head, had got as far as saying: "Well, will you do this?" when he suddenly rushed to the window and thundered out: "Stop!" in a fashion that brought the departing hunting-cart up short. He then produced his card, which had a Florentine address on it, informed me that he lived up yonder in the mountains, which I already knew, and had many horses and carriages at his disposal. What he proposed was that his men should bring them down with provisions and that he should escort me next day to another spot I had not yet seen, whence a still finer view of the two seas was to be obtained, the road to which ran through century-old chestnut woods all the way; and for that day he much hoped I would do him the honour to be his guest. "Can you cook, by the by?" he asked; I replied I could, after a fashion. "Enough no doubt," he said, "to broil a couple of beefsteaks at a forge half-way up the pass, and my man shall bring the meat with him. . . . Now I earnestly entreat you not to deny me this great pleasure." . . .

I looked at the Barone, who, with his sombrero, velvet coat, high boots, and distinguished though slightly dilapidated air, might have stood for the portrait of Don Juan approaching the fifties — Don Juan disgusted perhaps for the moment with town life and building up in the pure mountain air for further adventures. All this was noted, but also that he was a gentleman, and I thought the risk could be taken; so after very slight hesitation I gratefully fell in with the plan, left him to make the arrangements, and went up to bed.

The start was fixed for seven a.m. and our cavalcade consisted of

three carriages, four horses, and four mules, three of the last being hitched on somehow in harum-scarum tandem style. They never pulled an ounce and not infrequently careered along beside the horses. We went off at full gallop, dogs and all, across the valley, and struggled up the mountain road, reaching a sort of primitive forge at about ten o'clock. Frying-pans and all things needful were produced from one of the carriages, and the Barone was kind enough to say I handled the beefsteaks in a manner that inspired confidence. We conversed in French, much to my relief, and he revealed himself as a cultivated man with great knowledge of literature, not to speak of the perfect manners which of course had struck me the night before. I mentioned the Prior; the Barone knew him and said the mountains were full of saintly men of that type. "I don't find the mountains make a saint of me," he added, "but then I don't want to be one, nor, though you are impressed by him for the moment, do you, I fancy." Let no one think this was said suggestively, unpleasantly; it was just a quiet reflection — and a true one. The last stage was a three-quarters of an hour's stiff climb on foot. Path there was none, and it was well that I had declined the offer of a mule, for I cannot think less than four could have conveyed our paraphernalia up that place. Our bourne was a sort of grassy bridge, shaded by chestnuts, which connected two forest-clad mountains; on either side, peering at each other above the tree-tops, were twin peaks, wrought in the glowing, dark red rock that makes that part of the Apennines look at sunset like the upper reaches of Hell. From the bridge you gazed right and left for miles and miles till your eye met the two seas. And now the Barone began to lament and rave, for alas! once more the Adriatic had stubbornly shrouded herself in haze. I never saw a man more distressed, and what touched me was his evident fear lest I should think I had been lured thither under false pretenses; he actually appealed to the driver-in-chief to confirm his statement that nothing could be more favourable than the weather conditions. This may have been a bit of the Italian wiliness I find so delightful, for of course the servant backed up the master, and went on after the manner of his countrymen to inveigh against the undependableness of what Mr. Wells calls "that ancient mother of surprises, the sea." The Mediterranean, he added in a



[BUST BY HILDEBRAND

Baroness von Stockhausen

spirit of justice, seldom failed to oblige, it was always the other; "*In somma è un birbone quel Mar Adriatico*,"¹ he said in conclusion.

Meanwhile the other servants were spreading out the feast on a table-cloth of exquisite old linen, embroidered and becoronnetted, and the silver and glass though not in a high state of polish were beautiful in quality and design. No rough hunter's meal this, but a Decameronian banquet; chickens and tongues that put my beef-steaks into the shade, game pies, *foie gras*, and, above all, wonderful salads unlike anything I had ever tasted, which years afterwards I used to madden that old epicure Donna Laura by raving about, for of course I had forgotten details. I knew there was Chianti in the world such as that now before me, though, like the salads, I had never met it; but the Cordon Rouge was a cherished old friend. While we smoked over our coffee and liqueurs, the servants had their turn, and caroused behind some distant bushes on a jutting-out bastion of rock. I don't remember that we laughed much; it was pleasant, rather thoughtful talk, and we had silences too, like old comrades of travel. After one of these the Barone suddenly said: "This sort of thing would be unthinkable with any but an English girl. You are cold young people after all — full of vitality . . . but cold." I said that depended; if you were out on an excursion in quest of beauty, well — that was what you were out for, and quite enough too (or sapient words to that effect), and the moment passed. Perhaps he was giving me an opening on the off-chance of its being taken, but I don't think so; anyhow that was our one and only approach to the danger zone.

The wild drive down again was such as to suggest that the whole arsenal of *fiaschi* had been emptied behind those bushes, and as often happens when you are leaving a scene, never, I said to myself, can the superb landscape have looked so alluring. In vain one's eye sought the twin peaks from the valley below; my companion told me there was scarce a spot from which they could be seen. They might have been H. B. and Julia. . . .

The Barone had let me know delicately that he considered me his guest during the whole extra twenty-four hours I had stayed on at his request, and having only just money enough left for breakfast

¹ In short that Adriatic is a rascal.

and railway ticket I had accepted the position without demur. He now told me that after dinner a little surprise awaited me, but first let me say that, apparently determined I should have a thorough change from the fare of the last two weeks, his own cook prepared the repast, and the champagne was of some brand he had spoken of at lunch as far better than Cordon Rouge. "I like a *crescendo*," he remarked as he filled my glass, "what says Mademoiselle the Musician?" And *crescendo* it was. In all he did that day to please me, there was a splendid gesture as unlike a parvenu's display as he himself was unlike Sir Gorgius Midas; one guessed he lived sparsely enough out hunting, but, like the American friend I quoted, had found the pleasures of the table compensating when youth is past, and cultivated them at home.

Then came the crown of those fairy-tale hours he fashioned for me. After dinner I was taken into a barn-like annex with raftered ceiling, illumined not with petroleum lamps but with wax candles (he had thought of everything!). And there, making profound obeisances, stood a little band of wandering musicians, beaten up from Heaven knows where and at what trouble — a violin or two, a cello, a couple of zithers, a guitar, some strangely shaped wood instrument, not of the hautbois but of the clarinet family (which surprised me), and a discreet mingling of tambourine and other percussion. The Barone told them I was a young musician from afar — a very distinguished one he of course added — and bade them see to it that their national music should please me; after which he led me to a big sofa covered with skins where we sat in state like a king and queen. They played deliciously, with the intense rhythm of South Latin races — a rhythm we Anglo-Saxons not only have lost ourselves but seem incapable of appreciating in others. The culminating point was when the leader rose and, with the grace none but Italians can hope to attain, handed me his violin and begged for the honour of my collaboration. Most of their performance was by heart, but for certain numbers they had dirty little bits of MS. music (like London brass bands) and it was in one or two of these that I took part.

Thus the day came to a close; I said good-bye to the Barone, who was going off very early next morning by train in the other direction (something to do with a rifle), promised to visit him in his moun-

tain abode when next I should come to Italy, and — never saw him again! . . .

As epilogue I will add that walking home from the station at Florence, to my horror I met Lady Ribblesdale, a handsome, stately Scotchwoman of the attractive barrier type, one of my youthful “passions,” who looked rather startled, as well she might. My straw hat might have been borrowed of a scarecrow, my boots had not been blacked for a fortnight, and my blouse had only once been washed — and that by me in a mountain stream. I hastily shifted the cape on to my left arm and never knew if she caught sight of the revolver with its knotted strap (the buckle had been torn off long since). But I do know that she remarked to the Duchess of Sermoneta that Mrs. Smyth would be much distressed if she were to learn that her daughter was rambling about alone in such an extraordinary get-up; wherein she did my mother injustice.

The Duchess told me all about the Barone. He was of bluest blood, had run through two fortunes in his youth on the usual lines, fell in love with and married a penniless girl, got tired of her, settled what was left of a rapidly dwindling third fortune on his family, and being a great sportsman retired to one of his remote castles . . . not without feminine solace. There were meteor-like appearances in Florence, where he saw his wife and daughters and was considered an original rather than an outcast. Soon after I mislaid his card, and by the time I revisited Italy many years afterwards I had forgotten his name and lost sight of the Duchess, who no longer lived in Florence. Like the Prior he crossed my path — then the bush closed behind him for ever. Perhaps this is no misfortune. Even I, an incorrigible sequel-hunter, hold that certain very perfect experiences should have no sequel.

CHAPTER XXXIV. *Spring 1884 to Spring 1885*

BOTH before and after this trip of mine, Julia having now ceased to ration my visits, I saw the Brewsters constantly, and found them more and more delightful. One of the great advantages of the amiable habit some friends have of keeping one's letters is, that a memoir-writer can check present-day recollections by contemporary evidence. For that reason I was glad to come across a letter of mine, dated April 1884, addressed to a friend who knew the Brewsters slightly and had asked for my impressions:

. . . Her great idea is that he is to be a sort of Prophet, for which reason she encourages him in a bad habit of stooping from the neck, declaring it makes him look scholarly and unsmart! On the same lines she, the diplomat's daughter, is fond of assuring him that he hasn't the knack of associating with his fellow creatures, but this I think is partly because she herself loathes the world and wants his company in a dual solitude. Last year I once said to her that I thought his manners, though not traditional, were absolute perfection, and felt certain that if he chose he would have a great success in the world; and I saw at once how she shied away from the idea. . . . No one ever fascinated me more utterly than Julia does, though perhaps a good deal of it is the charm of things mysterious and unfathomable; one can't help hoping she may turn out to be human after all . . . ! They are the deepest of friends and I imagine were once passionately devoted to each other; but even if that part died down, as I suppose it always does, it wouldn't matter, for he is the sort of man it is impossible, besides all the rest, not to be fond of in a most comfortable way. Speaking for myself, what with comparing notes about mankind, morals, art, literature, anything and everything, what with the laughter and fighting and utter good comradeship, I have never had such a delightful relation with any man in my life. . . .

I have forgotten to say that Frau von Stockhausen had taken up her residence in Florence early in the spring, and, to my great admiration, was learning Swedish — at her age! Under the eye of her son-in-law, the one person of whom she stood in awe, she now developed an elaborate friendliness towards me, which though gratifying was rather alarming; and though they did not say so, I don't

think her daughters (for of course I wrote the glad news to Lisl) were taken in for a moment. It is never soothing to one's vanity to be disliked by striking and, when they choose, fascinating personalities, and by degrees, being optimistic in such matters, my alarm subsided, leaving the field to unmixed self-congratulation. The high-water mark of my favour was reached during another violent illness, rather on the lines of the previous one, which suddenly overtook me shortly after my return from the mountains. Fruit, flowers, and *billets-doux* were showered upon me, and once or twice my former enemy actually hovered about my bedside! All this because, as I learned later, a foolish young doctor whom the Hildebrands considered a genius had announced I was in a galloping consumption and could not live more than three weeks!

This news must have intoxicated Frau von Stockhausen, and if an incubus is about to be removed you sometimes almost love it. Or possibly, being an inveterate old comedian, the part of noble, generous, forgiving mother, which went so well with the beautiful powdered hair and delicate head-draperies, appealed to her. Or again, remembering Venice and Leipzig, she may have thought it wise to construct at the eleventh hour a screen between herself and possible reproaches from Lisl after my death. The one thing certain is that her previous sentiments towards me were fervent affection compared to what she felt at that moment.

I think that Florence group of friends must have been quite mad; this time I had no rheumatic pains, only a cough, a racking head, and fantastically high fever; and three days after being condemned to the grave I was sitting up in bed playing the violin and eating with appetite — symptoms the doctor considered conclusive. Julia had already telegraphed to my mother to come at once, and had also written, but in a characteristic fit of otherworldliness had put "Warnborough, Hampshire," instead of "Farnborough, Hampshire." And now for a coincidence that only happens in broad farce. It appears that, as no country had been mentioned, the enterprising Florentine postal authorities sent all the documents to New Hampshire, U.S.A. (Long after I was back at Frimhurst and in blooming health they came trickling in, much to the astonishment of my mother, for I had made one of my lightning recoveries and she had hardly grasped that I had ever been ill at all.)

Meanwhile the sudden collapse confidently predicted by the doctor failed to set in, and after a week or so he remarked for the first time that certain natures had the power to throw off the germs of tuberculosis in an astonishing manner. My friends were much relieved to hear this and congratulated me on my splendid constitution . . . but the joy of one venerable friend seemed to me a little overdone. Three weeks later H. B. went off to Grenoble, where a new château was being reared on the site of the old one, and Julia and I left together for Berchtesgaden to join the Herzogenbergs. As Frau von Stockhausen was due there in a week, it was unanimously agreed that my stay should last exactly six days, after which I left for England.

The last time I had been at Frimhurst, as I was now considered a financial expert, Mother and I had gone thoroughly into ways and means, and there is no doubt whatever that the problem of saving two hundred pounds or more on our yearly expenditure was soluble. A scheme had been drawn up between us which Papa, all in resenting it, could but admit was sound, and certain economies had been started at once. Others were to follow, and I had gone away full of hope. Alas! on returning this summer I learned from the others, who as I said were heart and soul in the matter (though Nina's bills did not look like it), that things had drifted back almost at once into the old channel and that the letting of Frimhurst was now imminent. It appeared that Mother, who was then at Homburg with Violet, was far more reconciled to the idea than my father — partly perhaps because, though she would have died rather than admit it, the prospect of a change was not wholly unwelcome, especially if it meant living abroad for a while; but mainly, I think, because women are more thorough in these matters than men, less content with tinkering at a situation. Certainly when she came back from Homburg such initiative as there was came from her.

We now had a very decent little organ at Frimley Church and I became bitten with organ-playing, which, as a sort of athletic exercise, appealed to me far more than the violin, not to speak of the prospect of tackling Bach on his own instrument. I determined to have lessons by and by in Leipzig (which I did) and meanwhile accepted with enthusiasm the invitation of our one really musical

neighbour, Sir William Cope, to spend a week-end with them and meet his old friend Sir Frederick Ouseley, the well-known organist and composer.

Strange to say, a new musical experience awaited me at Bramshill, Sir Frederick, who had studied music at Leipzig under Mendelssohn himself, being one of the very last of the old race of improvisers. He would ask you to give him a theme for a fugue; you invented, of course, as crack-jaw a one as possible, and off he started. A good deal of it was learned padding, but immensely musical and effective, and I, who had heard nothing like it at Leipzig or elsewhere, was much impressed. Several members of the Westminster Abbey Choir had also been asked to meet him and sang part-songs exquisitely in that superb old hall. But the most exciting thing was that at meals a slip of music was placed beside each of us, according to our voice, and the pitch being given with a tuning-fork, we sang grace at sight on Gregorian tunes unearthed by Sir William, who was a thorough musical antiquarian. At each repast new tunes appeared, and the effect was so indescribably solemn that it was difficult to settle down to one's soup. This is the only incident of any kind I can recall during that summer.

I had known for some time that Salomonstrasse 19 was among the many monuments of dead and gone burgher ideals doomed to demolithment; that summer the blow fell, so that when I went back to Leipzig in October new quarters, with the indispensable outlook over green, had to be found. The loss of the dear attic suite would have been heartbreaking but for the fact that my days in Leipzig were numbered; for it was now an open secret that Herzogenberg had accepted the post offered him by Joachim (Professor of Composition at the Hochschule) and of course I was to follow them to Berlin. Having to say good-bye to certain friends in Leipzig would be very sad, but on the other hand I looked forward to studying the Prussians — after all, the hub of the German Empire — at close quarters.

I remember vividly two incidents in that winter season. When I think of one of them my blood boils even now; the other is among the most delightful memories of my life.

The first was connected with the Egyptian Campaign of 1884-5,

throughout the course of which I had been lectured right and left by the Germans even more severely than during the South African War. The culminating point was the death of Gordon, a hideous tragedy that made me ashamed to look anyone in the face and was the beginning of a life-long horror of the Liberal Party. A day or two after the news came I was sitting in the Limburgers' box at a Gewandhaus concert, and so was the Commandant of the Leipzig garrison, a well-known 1870 General of the thin, snappy type. Suddenly, during the interval, he turned on me and in loud rasping tones expressed his opinion of a nation that left its best servants in the lurch. The offensiveness of his manner was indescribable, but being only too conscious of deep national humiliation I let the waves meet over my head. At last Frau Limburger, in spite of the absurd awe in which these military bigwigs are held, took up the cudgels and asked why they should arraign poor me for the sins of the English Government? To this the Commandant solemnly replied that on the contrary it was the duty of right-thinking people to seize every opportunity of bringing home "our German feeling in this matter" to all and any members of the offending race. I am quoting verbatim from a contemporary record the words of a distinguished General Officer to a young stranger dwelling in their midst! . . . This time, and no mistake, I realized that, as regards our country, Germany was a huge cistern full to the brim of hatred — military hatred anyhow — and that I was sitting under the escape pipe.

It is a relief to turn to the other incident, the realization of a long-cherished hope — namely, my mother's visit to Leipzig, which fell in April. She was very well just then, and as, whether I approved or not, her cupboards were full of gorgeous garments, I begged her to bring a few with her — a weakness for which no one will blame me. Naturally I wanted her to be a success in every way, and as it turned out, her triumphal progress among my friends flattered my fondest desires. I never saw her more entirely at her best, more radiant. Of the effect of the music on her I have already spoken, and knowing how it would increase her pleasure, I used to play beforehand the themes and chief beauties of everything she was going to hear. My dear kind friends competed with each other

for her presence in their Logen, lent her their carriages, and generally showered hospitality upon her. But what made me happiest was her adoration of Lisl, who was so perfect with her that even now, thinking of it, my eyes fill with tears. They saw each other daily and Mother's room was always stocked with flowers sent by her; "I have always loved you for loving them," she said. After Lisl, I think Frau Limburger was nearest to her heart; she saw at once how the jolly home life, more reminiscent of Frimhurst than anything I found elsewhere in Leipzig, must appeal to me, and knew how generously I had been allowed to share it. Of course too she at once detected the breeding hidden beneath eccentricities of manner that endeared that old friend to one rather than otherwise — in a word, saw eye to eye with me in everything.

Her German, at first a little wild and intermixed with French, daily came back to her more and more, and as ever she took the bull by the horns. There was one extraordinary conversational effort with Herr Frege, an absent-minded old gentleman not quick at the uptake under any circumstances, who knew not a word of any language but his own, and who had remarked to her, as politeness required, that she must be very proud of her *Fräulein Tochter*. "*O ja!*" said my mother, "*aber . . .*" — well, I will not try to quote her reply, which was an endeavour to convey that she sometimes felt like a hen that has hatched a duckling, but unfortunately she could not recall at the moment the German for "hen," "hatched," or "duckling." It happened at luncheon and I was far away, but saw her appeal once or twice to neighbours, point to an egg, make a gesture of swimming, and, my attention being by this time thoroughly aroused, heard the bewildered Herr Frege slowly saying: "*So, so — Ihr Fräulein Tochter geht also gern auf's Wasser?*" ("Ah, indeed, your daughter is fond of boating?") This my mother understood and went off into fits of laughter as did everyone else, but I am certain old Frege never had the faintest idea what it was all about.

The finale was a grand dinner party given by her to many whose kindness to me had been unwearying for the last seven years. She looked amazingly handsome, wearing all her diamonds, and insisted on Herzogenberg taking her in to dinner — a touch everyone appreciated — Lisl being on the other side of her left-hand neigh-

bour. Dr. Philipp Fiedler wrote a really charming poem in her honour, full of course of kindly references to her daughter. Limburger's speech, for there were several, was brilliant, funny, and in English, and she took Wach's, the polished diction of which was a little beyond her, for granted, asking me afterwards if his German wasn't rather *difficult*. The next day she went back to England, and I am certain was not exaggerating when she said many and many a time afterwards that she had never been happier in her life than during that fortnight.

Soon afterwards the Herzogenbergs left Leipzig, and I, who was going next day to Crostewitz (where I usually spent ten days or so before returning to Frimhurst), went to the station to see the last of them, as the phrase runs . . . to see the last of them, as one says hundreds of times in a lifetime with an unforeboding heart. I remember few dates, but that date, May 7, will be remembered to my dying day. As the train moved off and slowly rounded the curve, I saw Lisl still waving at the window . . . never to see her again in this world, except in dreams.

APPENDIX IV

[A]

From Elisabeth von Herzogenberg (Lisl)

(1)

[Written to me when I was in Italy]

Leipzig: November 5, 1882.

(In German) . . . You ascribe to Hildebrand qualities he certainly has *not*, and you know how much I like and am attracted by him. But he is a man who is only a good fellow just as long as his feeling lies that way, never from sense of duty: in principle he hates everything that binds — duty, conscience, law (except the law of Beauty), and morality. Quietly, and without his realizing it, life has sometimes taught him better, but at bottom he is still the same. . . . On the other hand all you say about Julia delights me, and I subscribe to every word. I hope you will get closer and closer to each other, and that you may more and more feel the blessing her presence brings with it. . . . I do like your saying that you feel “like a great rough egoistic young colt” beside her! . . . it is so true, yet how fond I am of you, my old one, in spite of all your vices! . . .

I thought of you specially yesterday when Rubinstein was here. He played Schumann’s F# major and some glorious Chopins and was so dear and amiable — and not at all in the love-making mood, thank Heaven. Though he was dead tired after rehearsing *The Maccabees* for four hours, he himself suggested playing, and but for one or two coarse touches in the Schumann played divinely. In a fit of good nature I had asked little A. to come, and she flirted beyond what is permissible with Nikisch. (In English) He kissed her hand every time she poured him out wine; he’s a regular Jack the Maiden Killer and I think it’s quite a shame. She is, I think, quite naïve, but rather silly. They have such terrible trouble at home, poor girls, that’s why I asked her. . . .

There are fine moments in *The Maccabees* but that’s all (in German) and on the whole I have the impression of a creative action that is a necessity to the creator but not to the world. Feebleness is oddly mingled with plenty of temperament, much perfume, and

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very much colour; but . . . the fruit is dead. And this man maintains in his blind madness that German "inwardness" (*Innerlichkeit*) means nothing, or rather is another word for impotence, whereby of course he is thinking of Brahms! He said some nice things about the ugly Joachim affair, and thinks he started the whole business in order to marry an English Lady Somebody! "If that is so," he added grimly, "then I have no use for his Beethoven Concerto and his *inwardness* and all the rest of it!" Though this is nonsense from the point of view of art, humanly speaking it was warm and sympathetic, and I was glad to hear the frivolous R. talking in that style.

I have not told you, I think, that Frau Joachim has been here and that I visited her in her hotel. I considered it my duty, though it wasn't easy, for I dreaded what the impression might be. But it was good beyond all expectation; she threw her arms round my neck, sobbing, and was so simple — merely the mother, the lioness robbed of her cubs — that I was deeply touched. Still I cannot get rid of the feeling that she has let herself drift in the direction of cheap, trivial, sentimental yearnings, and gazed forth right and left with immoderate lust of conquest; not with any evil intention, but after the fashion of people whose souls are poorly furnished. Things are different now; I think sorrow has ripened and ennobled her, and that took hold of me. Her despair when she speaks about the children (they have taken the daughters to England) is so touching. Imagine! not a soul, except Frau O. and myself went to see her, and in Berlin everyone cuts her — so cowardly and evil is the world! And the worst of all are the virtuous women, who make me perfectly furious.¹

It is amusing to think of your giving Hildebrand lessons in counterpoint! Of course you are the one who will learn most, and that is the important part of it. I am glad you like Julia's children so much. I said you would. You'll get to understand Harry better by and by; he is not an easy subject! . . .

¹ Later, when Herzogenberg accepted a post offered him by Joachim at the Hochschule, Lisl did not call on Frau Joachim, who was still living in Berlin.

(2)

Leipzig: January 2, 1883.

(In German) . . . Heinrich's Variations gave me immense pleasure. The thing came to him in a good hour; the theme is beautiful, finely articulated, prolific, and the variations are, as they should be, independent growths that nevertheless depend on the theme. I can't put it properly but you will know what I mean. A true theme for variations has a *paterfamilias* character that one recognizes at once, and the children should show heredity and yet each have its own individual physiognomy and value. . . .

We heard *Paradise and the Peri* once more the other day and I loved it more than ever — also ethically, though the poem moralizes in such an infuriating fashion and is really impossible to enjoy.² But even in the poem there are certain moments that transcend the temporal, and the repentant sinner is a figure that always makes me shed uncritical tears. Who can resist the words "There was a time when," etc.? . . . The music is admirable almost throughout, and yesterday the scoring revealed to me a wealth of beauty I never noticed before, so much so that I asked myself: "Is it I who have learned to listen, or has it learned to sound?" We go but seldom to concerts, perhaps once in three weeks to the Gewandhaus, and for that reason I enjoy as never before, and am sometimes utterly overwhelmed with the sort of gratitude you know of — as expressed in the "Trilogy of Gratitude." But the longer I live, the more do I stand in stupid amazement before figures such as Beethoven and Mozart, increasingly beset with vain questionings. It is only because we are accustomed to them that we don't go off our heads, and though I sometimes long to read biographies, and now mean to start on Thayer, I see how childish it is to try to find the key to such miracles in records of lives and activities. Each night when such a one is born is a kind of Christmas Day, and the only thing that should sound in their honour is the Song of the Angels. I can't quarrel therefore with Spitta's tone of panegyric in his *Life of Bach*, but the word one longs to hear, which might bring one nearer to the secret of such creative power, is never said! The German Mystics might have managed it, but I think silence is best.

² *Ungeniessbar*.

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Well, there is no end to learning in Art, and for that reason one might almost wish to reach extreme old age.

Frau Schumann dined with us at the Wachs, after playing the Mendelssohn Concerto divinely. Lili was charming, but as regards her, Frau Schumann is in bonds. To thaw her requires a certain amount of initiative; if I hadn't taken my courage in both hands with her from the first, she would never have shown me all her sweetness (*Holdheit*). . . .

(3)

Hosterwitz: September 2, 1883.

(*In English*) My oldest best darling. — I am going to write you a letter in my flowingest English, all of it. Don't laugh. How dear and kind that little moist red electric letter of yours was, and how it caressed my soul and how gladly I poked it into my pocket after having read the descriptive parts of it to Henry and my father, who asked me (an hour after) if I liked red ink? "No," I said, "by no means, don't say so, nor does Ethel, but of course she can't have had ink in her hotel so the electric machine must do its best!" Old little one, how pleased I am you were pleased with that quaint old Rothenburg. My brother loves it above everything and I am truly sorry we couldn't be there together. We were so happy and peaceful at Munich and I did enjoy you so, my Ethel, and felt over and over again how much it is to have you, and how happy I am about you, in spite of my unhappy moments. I think I couldn't be happier if you were always as you are sometimes (indeed often) and if that can console you for future times, write that behind your ears, old one!

How glad she'll be now, at home once more and in new clean dresses and stockings, the poor lost child, wrapped up again in all the comfort and warmth and cosiness of home! I even feel what it must be like here in our poor halved home, without mother or sister, but there is something in sitting at the old table one had one's feet under as a child, and seeing again all the good old pictures, and green chairs, and forks and knives, that is not to be compared with anything else. And how much more so for you, whom a longed for sweet atmosphere of home embraces — not only such little details — and sisters, and little Bob and nice old butlers (that

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steal, but with attachment) and your beloved English land, your heath and your moor, your big trees and your village green! . . . O I envy you, my darling, the fullness of your joy and the strength of your impressions. I well know there's a shade on all that, and that its name is Rhoda, but I know too one is able to enjoy and suffer alternately, and at the same time nearly, in an incomprehensible and not less true way. I do hope your joy will have sunny strength enough not to let you feel the chill of the cloud.

My darling, when will she go to Rustington and will she write immediately? And how's my leg and shoulder that I rubbed and pinched, and does she always think of me as her best friend and worrier? — for I worry you often, I know; but it being a part of me you must bear it, as I bear yours, my old darling, and love you not less for all that, my child.

Poor Lily! Her Kadi, as we call him you know, was really ill with gastric fever; and scarcely re-established, still quite weak and slender and sentimental, away he marched, tempted again by his old tempter, "the Guide-Fox,"³ on a great and long excursion, leaving poor Lily in terror and dismay, but incapable of protest, as she always is when those she loves shew a strong will. . . . Good-bye, my best child; I'll write better next time; it's my last dreadful pen. Write soon again and love your faithful

LISE

(4)

Leipzig: October 8, 1883.

(*In German*) . . . My reward for that tiresome time at Dresden was 10 days with Julia. How I enjoyed her! how proud I am of her both as human being and sister, and how happy I count myself to stand with her as I do! We talked a great deal — mostly in passages and on staircases as usual, when there was neither time nor opportunity. As questioner and listener she is always just what one wants, and has, among other wonderful qualities, that of pushing back everything in one that is weak and drawing out the best. . . .

(5)

October 10, 1883. (*In German*) . . . Julia's children are charming; they give me joy mingled with a little pain. At times I de-

³ A mountain guide.

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lighted in them, freed from all thoughts of self, but there were weaker moments in which my own needs came between us and clouded my vision. When others are happy with their children, each laying a protecting hand on some little head, it hurts me that no one seems to think of me, and sometimes it is hard to fight down one's tears. One word would be enough to banish the mood, but no one says it. . . . Whether all this never occurs to Julia, or whether she merely cannot find the word, I don't know; but this dead silence in the one region in which one needs help, and longs for one of those sympathetic touches that atone for so much and work such miracles, is amazing on the part of a being so richly endowed, and in many ways so generous; who, moreover, often refers to this or that incident obviously with the idea of pleasing and making one communicative. At times I am forced to conclude she has no notion how it is with me, how I have longed, how I still long, and what it has cost me to appear so calm. The terrible phrase we have so often laughed at: "knowing through pity" (*durch Mitleid wissen*) often recurred to me, and exactly expresses what I was asking for . . . and didn't get. Once more you see how near you are to me, in that I tell you all this, certain that you know me well enough not to see any reproach in it; merely the confession that I am human, and cannot associate with the gods without feeling that something is lacking. . . .

(6)

October 19, 1883. (*In German*) . . . Julia thought our Venice attempt last year a great mistake and that it was foolish of me to bring two such elemental people as you and my mother together. She knows how to put herself in the place of both of you, and that is why it hurts me that such a many-sided being should evince no comprehension for *my* state of mind. That leaves you more indifferent, you incorrigible little wretch — as usual chiefly interested in the great "I," and wanting to know what Julia said of you, and how she looked while saying it! . . . At Aibling you would have entered more fully into my little troubles . . . I remember one special evening, and am not ungrateful, my child, but you know how slow I am at dropping one part and taking up another. And though I know — *I know* — the pedal-point is indestructible, in the mean-

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time, what with your sorrow for a dead friend and your interest in a new living one I come off rather badly. . . . You say I made no allusion to your sad, sad letter from Rustington, but that was because I felt that you alone could help yourself there . . . that I could not help you . . . in fact I sometimes feel that I am of no real use to you at all — merely the dumping-ground you need. Rhoda and the past, Julia and the future, are your real preoccupations, and if I listen well, that is all you ask.

. . . I have grown fonder of Harry than ever before, and though his views are not mine I respect the iron consistency with which he carries them out and accepts the consequences. I have met no one who is such a perfect, harmonious result of culture in the best sense of the word. Compared to him we are all peasants . . . but once in an unguarded moment Julia confessed to me that it was a strain (*anstrengend*) being his wife . . . this in spite of the deep love and intimacy between them! . . .

. . . I don't think that phrase of hers about you which I quoted was meant ironically . . . but who shall interpret Julia? Yet how clear and limpid is the general impression (*Gesamterscheinung*)! She said a nice thing about you — that you have the rare and healthy quality of understanding that feelings of friendship fluctuate, are sometimes on the surface and at other times in the depths. I think I too can lay claim to this virtue and have successfully survived many of your phases. But I do wish one could synchronize better and that people wouldn't dive just at the moment you want them most. . . .

Ah! my Ethel, my child, let me tease you a little now and then — for I am so fond of you!

(7)

January 11, 1884. (*In English*) . . . Darling, of course I don't, how could I? find fault with you for thinking as you do of Julia, though I don't understand these things when they "monologise" — is that the word? — and in spite of Julia's kindnesses and consideration this is the case. Nor can I quite help feeling with a kind of bitterness how very easily a miser like she seems to do marvellous things when she sends a chicken and a bottle of wine in your illness. Of course where one economises one's effects the power is

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doubled, specially if one has to do with you, you old magnifying-glass — but I think of myself and Lili who love you from the deepest depths of our hearts . . . and it makes me sad!

(8)

[*The reference in this letter is to a String Quintet of mine that had just been produced at Leipzig.*]

January 27, 1884. (*In German*) . . . Yesterday was a great day, but until we saw how the public would like it the motherly hearts of Lili and myself beat horribly. One doesn't really enjoy the work of someone dear to you at a public performance (as I always feel when Heinrich's things are being done) and my real pleasure was at the rehearsal on Saturday, when my old heart beat with joy only. At the concert I was oppressed by a feeling almost of shame for the work of art thus laying bare its soul — specially in the C# minor movement, when I felt as if you were undressing before the horrid Leipzig public! But luckily they know nothing about what that piece might tell them! In other respects, too, I listened differently as one of the public, in some ways more sharply; both I and Heinrich noticed for the first time that there are too many stopping-places in the first movement, and afterwards made the remark to each other in the same breath. . . . Strange how clearly a wretched thing like a public makes one see; one is then feeling with the man in the street, more naïvely, more amateurishly — at the same moment more stupidly and more intelligently. . . . Thürmer [*the viola*] played wonderfully in the C# movement, especially the E# at the end — a point I drove into him well at the very first rehearsal. . . .

[*The full significance of the following letters, written after our meeting in the summer of 1884, will become apparent when the first chapter of Part III has been read.*]

(9)

July 30, 1884.
(*In English*) . . . Goodbye, my child, love me, and put up with me — for I take pains to think myself into your soul. . . . The world is much too complicated for me, and I thank Heaven that there are some things deep and simple at the same time! . . .

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(10)

August 11, 1884.

(*In German*) . . . Believe in me, as I do in you, beloved child. Whatever you ask of me would seem as nothing — it is good to be united thus! I hold you to my heart; tell me you feel how I love you. . . . L.

(11)

September 22, 1884.

(*In German*) . . . I will gladly read the articles on Flaubert and Baudelaire, but I believe more and more in the limitations of taste set by nationality. I am too German by instinct and education ever to feel more than respect for an “artist” like Flaubert. For me, the manure heap on which his flowers bloom never loses its stench (*Gestank*) — a feeling every Frenchman would jeer at. The French indifference to subject-matter, whether in literature or in painting, is too foreign to our nature and notions; to us it is important what an artist use his powers on, not only how he uses them — such is the tradition we have inherited from Schiller and Goethe — and a puddle in which the sun reflects itself remains a puddle. But these gentlemen fancy that everything their magical pen touches is thereby lifted into the region of Art, and demand of their readers an indifference on this point that none but such as possess French culture can achieve. The consequence of that principle is that a dying frog may inspire as fine a work of art as the Virgin Mary — a statement I myself was once obliged to sit and listen to! . . .

My darling, tell me often that you love me — it strengthens me in the faith of being able to be something to you now! . . .

YOUR OLD MOTHER

(12)

October 5, 1884.

(*In German*) . . . So the Röntgens have played you the new Brahms symphony! — another of my few musical joys taken from me! It always happens that when I have been specially counting on something of the sort as regards you, Fate snatches it away from me. I am ever too late! Not that I reproach the R.'s for having

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played it to you, that would be too ridiculous, but — I wish it had been I! Still I am delighted that you are so impressed and that the two movements you like best are my favourites.

The *Andante* touches me as do few things in music, so restrained and, in spite of its tenderness, so virile — an exquisite product of matured power. When first I heard it I thought involuntarily of a giant holding his breath for fear of waking a child. How adorable and beautifully articulated the first theme is — and the divine G major bit!



The man who can write that is not on the down-grade as Levi declares him to be; but Levi has become blind in that direction. . . .

Last night I read the articles on Flaubert and Baudelaire. Bourget's characterization of this literature as the Art of a Decadence — of a subtle but dying culture — is so exactly my own feeling that I ask nothing more in justification of my own antipathy. If a Frenchman, an admirer too of this Art, pronounces that sort of funeral oration on it, we who lack sympathy for it may well feel exonerated! . . .

Julia is in Berchtesgaden, Harry in the Sologne, where he has shot, so he writes to my father, 1½ hares in 6 weeks! . . .

(*In English*) We meet again then on Thursday! Good-bye, old friend of mine, we'll have a good time this winter, and you shall feel again the old, old story, that no one can love you truer than

YOUR MOTHER LISL

[B]

From My Mother

(1)

[After Rhoda's death]

November 1882. My own, own darling, — I can think of nothing but you! I know so well how miserable you are — such a dear, noble, charming woman and who loved you so! My darling how I wish I

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were near just to hold your hand and listen to you talk of her. Would you like to come home for a bit? we will pay your journey; *do*, dear, if you have the least thought of liking to do so; it must be so hard to bear this great sorrow without anyone to share it that you care for. Papa sends his dear love.

YOUR DEVOTED MOTHER

(2)

[*After her visit to Leipzig*]

April 1885. My own darling, — Here I am, safe and sound, and pronounced to be looking much better — “more lively” for my delightful fortnight. How I enjoyed it no words can say, but *you know*, and it will always be such a source of retrospective happiness. We had a beastly enough passage this time but I did not give in! My own pet, don’t forget to let me know my share of the coffee, tips, etc. — at least two £s — and tell me how Frau von Herzogenberg is and give her my love. I don’t think she has an idea how I really do love her and would do anything in the world for her! I have been talking to the family till I am half dead, to say nothing of travelling without stopping from 12 yesterday till 12 to-day. I found a dear little note of welcome from Nina, who is at Bonningtons and returns to-morrow. The dear girls V. and N. and Bob are quite well. I send you this photo of him to comfort you! do tell me how you like it.

Ever, my own, dear, kind, thoughtful, loving girl,

Your happy and devoted

MOTHER

[C]

From Frau Livia Frege

[*Translation*]

Leipzig: February 10, 1884.

My Ethel, — I wonder if by any chance your thoughts are with me? For three weeks I have been laid up with a bad cough and may not leave my room. Every evening I lie for many hours thinking and thinking — as often as not of you — and I write you long imaginary

Impressions that Remained

letters that are nothing but Psalms of Thanksgiving for your affection. I have been saying to myself that in all my life no one has ever cared for me in the way you do. Many have been kind to me, many, too, were fond of me, but all these got something in return; it may have been assistance, amusement, pleasure in my singing, what you will — there was something to offer in exchange for love. But you, who only knew me as a cross-grained old woman! . . . Real affection is always a gift. I have often said to myself that you are the embodiment of a spirit that once upon a time, perhaps, lived in and rang out of my singing. When, in days gone by, I sang with passionate enthusiasm the Spring, the flowers, the birds, the human heart, I think the atoms transmogrified themselves into one who came to meet me in the form of love personified — you! . . .

Again a night lies between these lines. How often I conjure up the thought of your inner self; are you busy composing, or is the dull mood still on you? — No! I feel certain that you are in good spirits again! I myself am weighed down by many things just now; how much there is in one's life that no words can convey! For me, at such times, the aria in the *Passion* "Have mercy, Lord, on me" expresses it best; what unearthly things the violin says . . . how it laments with one! Only those who have suffered deeply can understand that aria.

To turn to a very different subject, there is a masked ball here tomorrow; the young people are busy trying on costumes and inventing new dances, and all Leipzig, that is to say that particular group, perambulates the streets in a state of mental intoxication. You ought to be here to invent something really funny; no one seems to have a notion how that sort of thing ought to be done.

Forgive my bad writing; half my being is nervous aches and pains, but with my whole heart I embrace thee, beloved child.

Always thy

LIVIA

Part III

IN THE DESERT



CHAPTER XXXV. *A Retrospect of* 1884-85 to Summer 1885

I HAVE now reached a difficult part of my memoirs, in that it is not possible for me to relate the inner history of an event that shaped my whole existence. The merest indications must suffice, such as will render the rest of my story intelligible, and above all throw light on what was for me the apex of the tragedy and the dominating fact of the years yet to be dealt with in these pages — my severance from the Herzogenbergs.

It is a question whether a sorrow such as a broken friendship can be allowed to assume in the written page the proportions it did in real life. Personally the dissolution of anything that once had strong vitality, from a civilization to a human bond, has always interested me even more than origins. I remember, for instance, how the gradual turning into hatred of Saul's love for David — still to my mind one of the burning incidents in literature — preoccupied me as a child, and it was the same with the disappearance of the Aztec civilization. Perhaps others feel as I do about this particular form of death in life. I hope so, for if the only claim to interest put forth by a writer is that his tale is faithfully told in every detail, how can one treat what went deepest as a side issue? It must be remembered that this friendship was the cornerstone of the keenly lived, complex sort of existence I have been trying to describe, and that when it gave way life had to be begun afresh — which, as a wise woman I know once said, is a thing we must be prepared to do an indefinite number of times to the very end. But apart from

other considerations the case in question seems to me unusual, puzzling, indeed almost inexplicable as psychological study. I spoke of a way of looking at moral problems, as with eyes devoid of eyelashes, which even in the days of youthful enthusiasm struck me as characteristically German; it may be that in this experience with my friend I struck a primal strain of nationality. Be that as it may, after all these years I think I can undertake to tell the story fairly and without bitterness; almost as impersonally, too, as if it had happened — which sometimes seems to be the case — to someone else. But first I must go back a little.

It may be remembered that the Brewsters held unusual views concerning the bond between man and wife, views which up to the time of my arrival on the scene had not been put to the proof by the touch of reality. My second visit to Florence was fated to supply the test. Harry Brewster and I, two natures to all appearance diametrically opposed, had gradually come to realize that our roots were in the same soil — and this I think is the real meaning of the phrase “to complete one another” — that there was between us one of those links that are part of the Eternity which lies behind and before Time. A chance wind having fanned and revealed at the last moment, as so often happens, what had long been smouldering in either heart, unsuspected by the other, the situation had been frankly faced and discussed by all three of us; and I then learned, to my astonishment, that his feeling for me was of long standing, and that the present eventuality had been not only foreseen by Julia from the first, but frequently discussed between them. To sum up the position as baldly as possible, Julia, who believed the whole thing to be imaginary on both sides, maintained it was incumbent on us to establish, in the course of further intercourse, whether realities or illusions were in question. After that — and surely there was no hurry — the next step could be decided on. This view H. B. allowed was reasonable. My position, however, was that there could be no next step, inasmuch as it was my obvious duty to break off intercourse with him at once and for ever. And when I left Italy that chapter was closed as far as I was concerned.

I then went, as has been related, to Berchtesgaden, and there, accustomed as I was to lay bare my life before her, Lisl had learned

all there was to know. Blame neither attached to me nor was laid at my door; we saw eye to eye in all points, and parted, as may be imagined, more closely if more tragically knit than ever.

But before I had been many weeks in England it became manifest that the chapter was not closed after all, and a correspondence began between my two Florentine friends and myself which continued throughout the following winter — the winter which culminated in my mother's visit to Leipzig. The point under discussion was whether my policy of cutting the cable was appropriate to this particular case, whether it would not be to the advantage of all three of us (which was H. B.'s contention) that he and I should continue friends — not necessarily meeting, but at least corresponding.

If the people concerned in a drama such as this are respectively cruel, treacherous, faithless, or hypocritical, any and every development is conceivable; but in this case, insane as we may all seem, neither were H. B. and I bent on pursuing a selfish end regardless of giving pain, nor was Julia consciously playing a part. The story of those months — a fantastic chapter in psychology — will never be told by me, if only for the reason that it is not my story alone; what has been said must suffice — and I think it will suffice — more or less to explain Lisl's subsequent action. And if asked how I came to swerve from my decision not even to discuss the "friendship" theory, I can only say that the case was not as simple as it seems, and that a very genuine doubt existed in my mind as to how I ought to act — a doubt shared at times, though I think against her better judgment, by Lisl herself.

That winter was not a happy time for either her or me. Every turn in the situation, every action, every thought of my heart was known to her, and if those who were presently to hound the Furies in my direction had counted on having revelations to contribute they were disappointed. But the fact of my having gone back on my first decision not to discuss the matter disquieted her profoundly. She knew and allowed that I was not playing for my own hand, but her simple instinctive nature, distrustful of subtleties and superhuman points of view, clung to the proved ways of tradition rather than the road I was travelling. On the other hand, to admit

her contention that all wives feel the same in certain cases, human nature being always bound to have the last word, would to my mind have implied scepticism where I felt profound faith, as also to drag a proud banner — and it was not my banner only — in the mud. Thus there were interminable and sometimes distressing arguments — distressing especially for her since she was not sure of her ground. But I was, or thought I was, sure enough of mine; borne along by the strongest, most intoxicating wind that drives human souls before it, being moreover the only person among those concerned who had taken her into confidence, as often as not I ended by bringing her round to my point of view — in other words I dragged her out of her orbit.

It is easy afterwards to say, as some of her critics did, that she ought to have stood up to me better. Later on she ascribed her quasi-acquiescence in the situation to affection for me; but a greater reason was her own uncertainty, and the greatest, perhaps, the moral and physical shrinking of a diseased heart from perpetual warfare. And all this time she was suffering . . . suffering; but her self-control and power of making the moment suffice were such that not till years afterwards did I realize it fully.

Thus the winter wore on. Shortly before we parted that May morning, one of her relations, I think her brother, had written to her insinuating things so unjust and cruel about me that every other feeling had been overborne by the old faithful protecting love which, in spite of some difficult moments, had never really failed me. Let one trivial incident show how impossible it was for me to foresee what was to happen, how far she herself was from foreseeing it. That evening I took her some roses; she was out, and next day the following little note arrived, written in her quaint English (which signified, in later years, a harking back to the tender spring-time days of our friendship) — signed, for the last time, with the name she had given herself:

Your roses touched me deeply, my darling. I am quite warmed up by their scent and colour, and soothed by their nice cool touch. It was something so new and old at the same time to get flowers from you, and you don't know the pleasure you made me. What pleasure little things can sometimes make! Darling, have faith in my faith. I have a heavy heart and still I enjoy somehow the idea of having to fight for you, for

my true loyal child. Don't distrust me when a word seems sometimes to contradict me! *Credo, credo in te!*

YOUR OLD, OLD MOTHER

From Leipzig she went straight to Dresden, where she was to encounter the brother, but before they had met she wrote me a long letter to Crostewitz, in which the differences between us are once more threshed out; full of tenderness and pain, it ends thus:

Ethel! child of my sorrow! . . . I was too tired and miserable, after all, to write in the train, so waited till I got here, but I doubt if the result will give you much pleasure! Farewell! . . . if I loved you less how little I should suffer!

YOUR FAITHFUL LISL

Meanwhile, as various wild reports had reached my host and hostess, who knew that whole Florentine group, I told them the real story in confidence, informed Lisl I had done so, and waited day by day in great agitation for news of what was happening in Dresden. It was our custom to write to each other once a week, sometimes oftener, and now, at the most critical moment of our lives, dead silence! . . . Not till I was back in England did the longed-for letter, dated June 15, arrive, and if in comparison with others I was to receive later it is still almost loving, there was a new tone in it — the work of disintegration had begun. Its gist was that our common life could not continue for the present, and that if it gave me as much pain to read these words as her to write them, she thought I would nevertheless see, on reflection, that it was inevitable. Of breach not a word; on the contrary entreaties for "good" letters that should show her I understood and accepted the situation. This was not all however; reproaches were levelled against others, demands made, past incidents raked up, and my replies were as may be imagined; in fact it was a correspondence between two worn-out people, disputing as to which particular wave had cast the vessel on the rocks, and whether shipbuilder, chartmaker, or captain was to blame.

Suddenly her letters ceased altogether. As I afterwards learned, a new figure had now come on the scene, a woman whose chronic jealousy was a legend, and who during my long spell of delightful intercourse with her and her husband had had cause, in early days

— perhaps during a week — for jealousy. It had happened long ago, the whole thing was utterly harmless, born of high spirits and vanity, indeed more jocular on both sides than anything else; still it was the only time in my life I had done anything distantly approaching to what Lady Ponsonby called “prigging hairpins” and no doubt I deserved the drubbing administered by Lisl after confession. Since this peccadillo jealousy had died down — as well it might — and all three of us had been the best of friends and comrades ever afterwards.

It is only fair to say that this lady was much attached to Julia Brewster, and rather late in the day had developed into a strong upholder of the domestic hearth — as befits a convert, a jealous woman, and a mother; all the same I sometimes wonder whether in that summer of 1885 some real cause of complaint against her husband accounted for the zeal with which they both joined in the hue and cry led by my old enemy. Men and women are mean on different lines, and there is a particular sort of male meanness inherent in the relations of the sexes which permits erring husbands to go great lengths in the way of propitiation; otherwise I cannot account for this belated double-barrelled zeal against me. But its effect was deadly, for it appears to have been a necessity of Lisl’s nature to harden her heart against me before she could summon up courage to break our bond; and just because these two were by way of being my friends, their influence told where ancient animosity such as that of her relations would probably have achieved nothing.

I meanwhile was at Frimhurst, asking myself in anguish what could be the meaning of this second, still more terrifying silence. Clotilde Limburger was staying with us, as arranged between our respective mothers in April. I know that my sisters, who were of her own age, delighted in her, and I believe she enjoyed herself, but the rest is a mist. Only one thing stood out clearly in connection with her coming, that, given provincial conditions, it was wonderful of Frau Limburger to let her come at all; for Leipzig was already gossiping about Lisl and me, and it would have been easy to find some pretext for postponing the visit. But none was put forward, and though there may have been a suspicion at home that something was wrong, no one said anything, and life went on as usual.

At length in August came a letter in which only the exquisite handwriting — she used German characters and made them strong, flowing, and decorative — reminded me of Lisl. As I said before, there were no fresh accusations to bring, but everything I was and ever had been was drawn by the hand of a stranger — almost of an enemy. It appeared I was a Juggernaut car driven by a “Lebens-teufel,” or rather a wild horsewoman blinded by self-love, galloping rough-shod over all I met. It was conceded that I was innocent of desire to wreck any fellow mortal’s happiness, least of all that of a woman I dearly loved, but of what avail, asks the writer, are innocence and excellent intentions if none the less devastation marks your path? . . . And harshly as she judged me, the rest of the situation she gauged correctly; reading what she had to relate, as one divorced from theories and at last in contact with the realities of a situation, it became evident to me that human nature had indeed prevailed over superhumanity. The scales fell from my eyes and I suddenly saw myself, not as co-adjutor in a noble reading of Destiny, but simply as thief of someone else’s goods. . . .

Lisl had spoken of devastation; but if for a passing moment there was a phase that seemed to come under that heading, the chief agent was the evil genius of that group, my old enemy. Where tact, wisdom, moderation, fairness were needed, bitter, reckless violence held the field — but that too I only learned long afterwards; meanwhile what more obvious than that I, and I alone, was responsible for everything? . . . To return to the letter, I was upbraided for venturing to reproach the writer for her long silence, for mentioning my own pain at all in this connection, seeing what others were suffering, for speaking as if I had any claim on her as compared to the claims of others. Then came bitter self-reproaches for having played her part so ill during the past winter, and I guessed she felt that from the first her line should have been: “Act thus and thus, or our friendship must come to an end.” Would it have changed anything? Possibly — for the time being — for life was inconceivable to me without Lisl; but no such ultimatum had been presented — an omission for which she was never to forgive herself. Finally she wrote that her expiation must be to give me up — that the only reparation I could make was to accept the fact . . . and disappear. Hardly believing my eyes, I read that, given my fac-

ulty of getting all there was to be got out of life, I should no doubt find consolation; and last of all, what cut me to the heart most, came the words: "the foundering of our little boat is but an episode in the general shipwreck." . . .

Reliving this shock, as I did the other day thirty-three years afterwards, it seems to me strange that I did not go mad. For seven years my life had been as inextricably mixed up with the Herzogenbergs' lives, whether musically or humanly, as if I really had been their own child; so much so that when, owing to her parents' jealousy, I had to keep away from the house even for a day or two, it seemed to us a small tragedy. And such was my bottomless faith in Lisl that though her letters abound in protestations of undying fidelity — a thing that strikes me curiously now — in none of mine is to be found the slightest word to call them forth. As soon would I have asked a promise from the sun to rise daily. If therefore the idea of even a temporary separation seemed to me, at first, monstrous, the core of the anguish was suddenly finding myself confronted with a total stranger. Had she written words such as these: "However long our parting may last, if for ever and ever, believe in my faith and love as I do in yours; keep my picture bright and untarnished before your eyes, as I will yours before mine," then I think — or so it seems to me now — that I could have achieved resignation. Of course her "distress" is spoken of, but every word which could suggest that our past was a living, aching memory in her heart seemed to have been carefully eliminated.

I wrote to her, bewildered, appealingly, in despair, and received one or two more letters in reply, each colder than the last; finally, on September 3, in the very words I should use today, I bade her farewell till better days should dawn, and silence fell between us — a silence to be broken by her, for one brief moment only, two years later.

As epilogue to this part of my story let me say that I am now old enough to realize how great a rôle our own hopes and desires play, without our knowing it, in the shaping of our course. This conceded, I can only say my mistaken reading of Julia's soul was honest, and that if that time were to be lived through again, I believe, given

the lights I then possessed, that I should act as I did then; to do otherwise would have been to use a measure unfit for the standard of that case as I saw it. This I know; into that mistake of mine I put better stuff than into many a blameless enterprise of later years; and after all, if, as I said, the word "success" does not mean for me all it implies, still less does the word "failure"; how will our wisdom and our foolishness look to us in another world? Nevertheless I had been faithless to my own instincts — and for that the penalty had to be paid. The strands of what was to become the fundamental friendship of my life were severed, not to be re-joined for many years. I burned my boats and went into the desert.

And now the question was how my future life should be shaped. Lili Wach, who had suspected nothing, was now told all — as far as such things can be told in letters. She never admitted for a moment that the breach could be anything but a passing necessity, and urged that for more reasons than one it was my obvious course to vanish for a while from the German scene. If I effaced myself in every way, the waters would surely subside, whereas my presence among people who knew us both could only increase the gossip, turmoil, and bitterness. Eventually I came to be of this opinion, and the fact that Herzogenberg was to enter on his duties in Berlin, not in 1886, but that very autumn, simplified matters. So I took the hardest resolution of my life — to remain quietly in England instead of going back to face the situation, which was my passionate desire. It was never easy to work at home — but I then believed I should never again work anywhere.

My mother, now fully informed, was perfect; the Leipzig visit had shown her my normal life abroad, and having learned to love Lisl she knew exactly what the breach signified in every sense. Being at bottom a very reasonable woman, she maintained that for the time being Lisl had probably no choice but to break off relations; but she too felt certain that inasmuch as no one accused me of anything but blindness and lack of judgment, all would come right in the end.

Meanwhile Lili Wach hoped much, and so did I, from a meeting between her and Lisl (hitherto successfully evaded by the latter) which was to come off in the early winter. But this last and best

card was played in vain. It was impossible, wrote Lili, to elicit any satisfactory explanation of her attitude towards me. She had begun by saying it was forced upon her by others, then retracted and passionately declared it was herself who willed it so. The separation . . . yes, Lili Wach had answered — that I too accepted now as inevitable; but how should I or anyone who had watched our relation all these years understand the accompanying circumstances? how came Lisl, for instance, to forward to her the letter of a third person who knew me but superficially, and who held that at bottom I was of a light nature, one incapable of deep feeling, who played with human material as a sculptor plays with clay? I can imagine the gentle, mordant irony with which Lili would ask how the judgment of an outsider could possibly affect that of people who had known me for years and years? . . . and perhaps poor Lisl regretted that piteous attempt at self-justification. Then Lili had tried by every means in her power to hold up before unwilling eyes the picture of their common friend, feeling the while that she was achieving nothing. At last, after repeated entreaties not to pursue the subject, it had been dropped as hopeless, and therewith a painful interview had come to an end.

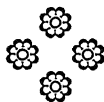
There is a wonderful poem by Goethe about the way the gods lead you into mischief and pass on, leaving you to bear the consequences as best you may. Often and often I thought of that poem in connection with the activities of the couple I spoke of; for this letter, the stone that brought down the avalanche, was from the husband! Surely there was something fantastic and impersonal about such a Nemesis for a harmless little flirtation . . . ? For that reason I bore these blind instruments of Fate no grudge and met them with pleasure in after years.

I will not dwell upon other incidents of those nightmare months, on the campaign of defamation embarked in by my old enemy, at Florence and elsewhere, reports of which reached my mother and must have cut her to the heart. At last Conrad Fiedler wrote to Lisl urging her to break her damning silence — a silence the world could but interpret in one way: namely, that I had committed some heinous crime, and that my best friend, having now found me out, had repudiated me. Her reply was that those whose feelings it was her first duty to consult asked but one thing of her, to discuss the

matter with no one, and that she was bound to respect that wish! . . . Finally I made up my mind to return to Leipzig in about a year's time, come what may — a decision approved by the Fiedlers, who insisted that I should begin by staying at Crostewitz. Thus the world would see that they, who possessed all the facts, knew I had done nothing disgraceful.

Before passing on, one word. . . . The other day, re-reading that indictment of Lisl's, I felt, and remembered feeling at the time, that much of it was true; indeed, I have seldom received a similar letter, unless from the obviously stupid and malignant, without realizing that herein lies the sting. The whole difference between real friends and people who, without being active enemies, are not well disposed towards you is that the former see your faults but love you because of certain other qualities, whereas the latter see the faults only and not unnaturally dislike you. And even in the case of active hatred and malice how comes it that just such and such a monstrous charge is brought? You know it is untrue; the left arm happens to be too long; but what makes it appear too short to the eye of ignorance or malevolence? Where is the error, and can it be corrected without imperilling something essential?

This has always seemed to me a great problem not only in character but in art, and that is why I mention it here.



CHAPTER XXXVI. *Summer 1885 to Autumn 1886*

IN the course of that summer of 1885 Violet became engaged to Dick Hippisley, an admirer specially backed by Aunt Judy, and of course a member of the Corps she favoured. It was evidently someone's duty to set the ball rolling, for one day the station-master at Farnborough had remarked to Harry Davidson: "Your good lady and Miss Mary were snapped up pretty quick, but this lot don't seem to go off somehow." The event greatly excited the many

mothers of marriageable daughters, who abound in neighbourhoods such as ours. One of these, my dear Mrs. Napier, who was still in command at Sandhurst, met my mother on the platform shortly after the engagement became known: "O my *dear* Mrs. Smyth," she cried before all the porters, "I *do* congratulate you! . . . that *nice* Mr. Hippisley! . . . Do tell him he could have had *any two* of my girls for the asking, and welcome!" This engagement, and the fact that Dick Hippisley celebrated the occasion by at once christening us "the Smyth Family Robinson," are the only incidents, together with Clotilde Limburger's visit, that I can recall during that summer. But an event was soon to happen which profoundly affected my whole outlook.

That autumn, staying up at Muirhouse, I met Harry's sister-in-law, wife of the present Archbishop of Canterbury, then Dean of Windsor. Following my principle of not speaking of the living, I will only say that thanks to her friendship, the kindness of the Dean, and that house of refuge the Deanery, life became possible to me during the next two years. Shortly after our first meeting, Edith Davidson introduced me to one whom she considered a greater physician of souls than herself, Mrs. Benson (of her I shall speak later, for alas! while these pages are being written she has died), and between these two everything that human beings can do to help a fellow mortal was done. I began taking organ lessons at Windsor of Sir Walter Parratt — revelling in Bach as played by him, who better than any organist I have ever met knows how it should be done — and worked steadily all round; far better too than I thought at the time. And, last but not least, I was, as ever, liberally mounted throughout that winter by Charlie Hunter.

In March 1886, no doubt to the gratification of our well-wisher at Farnborough Station, another of the younger batch of Miss Smyths "went off," Nina marrying Herbert Hollings, a neighbouring young squire whom my father extolled as a coming political influence in the county, and whom I thought equally highly of because he had played cricket for Winchester, racquets for his college at Oxford, and was good all round at games.

I have never been able to understand how great trouble can preclude the enjoyment of certain sides of life. A good hunt, a hard game of tennis, a close golf match, an amusing situation — how can

these ever cease to appeal? And above all, if once you get started, what can rob you of the thrill, the blessed oblivion of work? Thus it came that I lived many delightful hours during that period of exile, not only in the winter but in the ensuing summer, when I spent much of my time with the Hippisleys. They had rented an exquisite little sixteenth-century house, Queen Down Warren, near Sittingbourne — one of the loveliest parts of England — and of their young friend and landlord, Harry Faussett Osborne, I have a particularly sympathetic recollection because once when we were passing a very rich manure heap he spat and then said: "I beg your pardon, but we *are* on spitting terms, aren't we?" I then learned for the first time that this is a hygienic precaution.

But another neighbour of the Hippisleys was really an exceptional personality, a certain Major Templer belonging to the Balloon Section of the R.E. at Chatham, a sort of Wild Man of the West whose hobby it was to pick up for a few pounds horses deemed unmanageable, tame them, and sell them in the shires for three figures — if possible with the rider "has carried a lady." He and I suited each other to perfection (among other things he was passionately fond of being sung to), and I did more methodical schooling that summer than ever before or since, not to speak of many loans of half-tamed horses during subsequent hunting seasons. One, a magnificent fencer, gave me a nasty fall; apparently slightly off his head from the first, he suddenly went quite mad and hurled himself sideways over some rails during a check. They afterwards discovered that the cantle of the saddle had snapped and was boring a hole in his back. We all remember thundering full gallop under the gateway of Leeds Castle doubled up on the top of Major Templer's coach, the scratch team of hunters-on-the-make having been out of hand for a couple of miles or so, and how he remarked when they came to a standstill, disordered and amazed, in the quadrangle: "I thought they'd have to pull up here." And I also remember squeezing with him into the basket of a diminutive captive balloon, dressed in my habit, and what a tight fit it was even then, the balloon being built for one aeronaut only; and how the company of R.E.'s hanging on to the rope soon found themselves careering through the fields over hedges and ditches, some of them on their backs. Thus we progressed, at less than an angle of 45°

with the ground, for half a mile or so, and eventually fetched up in a friendly tree. The delightful thing about Major Templer was that if out for a spree of this kind, trifles such as a rapidly rising wind never stopped him.

I don't know if ever before in the history of the world the honour of a very harum-scarum man has been saved thanks to the astonishing memory of a woman who kept no diary, but this is what happened to Major Templer. One day he arrived at the Warren slightly, only slightly, perturbed: a ballooning secret, something to do with a valve, had been betrayed to the Italian military authorities, and his senior, a certain Major X, had been heard saying that in his opinion Templer was the traitor. The two men notoriously hated each other, and at that moment our friend was more amused than angry. But next day a strange thing happened; he found a blackbird with its beak cut off nailed to his door, and being versed in the symbolism of the country folk, with whom he was on excellent terms, knew this was a friendly warning that the "beaks" were after him and that if guilty he had better "fly" the country. Two days later the Hippisleys got a note from him saying he was under arrest at Chatham and would they come at once? It appeared that everything depended on his being able to account satisfactorily for his whereabouts on three given days in the month before last — a serious undertaking for a man who forgot today where he had been yesterday — but since he and the Hippisleys were constantly meeting, he thought that perhaps they could help him.

Now, Violet is blessed with a fabulous memory, so much so that when she was a tiny child Johnny used to amuse himself by teaching her the names of all the Derby winners for decades upon decades. Casual visitors were put on to ask her suddenly: "What horse won the Derby in such and such a year?" and never was she caught tripping. On this occasion, therefore, she applied herself hopefully to the task of reconstructing Major Templer's past, working from dates it was possible to fix, such as a golden wedding, a meet of the hounds, the painting of the Warren animals' portraits, and so on. One more interview with the prisoner and the task was accomplished, nor could a Q.C. sent down to cross-examine her find a flaw. She was subpoenaed, the trial began, and she drove into Chatham four days running, but was never called, as the case for the

prosecution collapsed; the Government withdrew the charge, and Major Templer "left the court without a stain on his character."

It was a monstrous business, and our friend St. John Brodrick, who was then at the War Office, subsequently asked Violet why she had not written to him at once instead of letting them make such fools of themselves? Her reply was that no one could suppose the authorities would start a case like that on such flimsy evidence; after which it is unnecessary to remark that Violet was then a very young woman.

I have always had a passion for walking-tours, and in the summer of 1886 the Hippisleys, their retriever Hurry, and I embarked on a tour in Cornwall, which began with an absurd incident set in the atmosphere of a recently married man's tender susceptibilities. Arrived at Falmouth, whence we were to proceed on foot, Violet suddenly remembered that a former admirer, a Mr. S., had a beautiful house on the bay and also a sailing yacht, so a letter was despatched announcing our arrival. It soon became evident that her friend, who instantly presented himself, was not clear in his mind as to which of us was Mrs. Hippisley, and as it seemed advisable in order to get the maximum of favours out of him to leave the matter in doubt, I persuaded her to take off her wedding-ring. Alas! the plan succeeded only too well, and ere long, at Dick's earnest entreaties, the ring was restored to its place; and to his honour be it said our host bore the shock like a man, his kindness suffering no diminution. Among other places he took us to was a long spit of rocky land, half buried in monster geraniums, fuchsias, and roses. At its extreme end was a beautiful old church, the eighty-year-old parson of which had spent three-quarters of his life lying flat on a scaffolding under the roof, patiently covering beam after beam with fantastic carving. The light was too bad to judge of the result, but this vision of an old man who knew how to live needed no special illumination.

On the other hand, for quite other reasons, I shall never forget a very hot morning in Falmouth waters — a dead calm, and that dreadful little yacht rocking in a slight swell, while each of us drearily trailed a mackerel line and hated nice Mr. S. for continually telling us we had caught a fish and should haul it in. At length

one of us crudely suggested the boat and we were rowed to shore in the nick of time, having the presence of mind to take with us the luncheon we had hitherto been unable even to look at. Once safe on the beach it seemed incredible that we could ever have loathed the very idea of dressed crab.

Our general plan was to begin by walking along the coastguard path to Land's End, and as Violet's head was not good, Hurry's collar was buckled round her waist and Dick led her by the chain like a monkey. Once when he and I scrambled down to a cove to bathe, a huge boulder of serpentine decorously dividing us, she was chained up aloft lest she should slip or become affected with the madness of the Gadarene swine. Economy being our principle, we afterwards held a laundry festival in the cove, to assist at which Violet was carefully piloted down, and then for the first time we noticed, having to carry them ourselves, that things washed in the sea never dry. This was one of the many occasions when Violet, asked to take a short cut across a wide, dull peninsula, refused to play the walking-tour game and sent Dick off to "raise anything on wheels." Soon we were driving six miles to the nearest town in an ancient wagonette, from every anatomical projection of which intimate garments hung flapping in what is called in those parts a gentle breeze.

All together I wasted much breath on that tour trying to check Violet's backslidings from austerity. There were arrivals — not on foot — at hotels, where what I thought over-sumptuous repasts were ordered for themselves and Hurry by the other two, Dick, though a frugal eater, being in the early acquiescent stage of married life and loth to leave his wife alone with her soaring appetite. As it was my great ambition to keep somewhere near our estimate of daily expenditure, at last I proposed ordering two dinners and one plate of scraps for the dog, the result to be divided among us. The plan was adopted, no one went hungry, and we "put threes" into the bills. But when it came to Dick ordering a pint of champagne for the exhausted Violet, and suggesting that three should be put into that bill too, this essay in finance was rejected by me, and what is more Dick never heard the last of it.

It is difficult not to launch into a paragraph beginning: "The beauties of this most romantic county exceeded all expectation";

taking that as written, I will go on to say that Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill had just foundered the Liberal Party, and throughout our wanderings two things struck us: firstly the beautiful diction of the country folk, which reminded one of Highlanders' talk, and secondly the sensibleness of the questions constantly addressed to us as visitors from the Far East. Again and again we would hear the remark: "Mr. Gladstone is a very clever man, but so are Lord Hartington and John Bright — and good men too, both of them. Now why are *they* against the bill?" and in spite of Papa's and my opinion of radicals I conceived great hopes for the future since character still seemed a factor in politics. At Helston we chanced on a political meeting at which Mr. Courtney, afterwards Lord Courtney, was to speak, and for the first time in my life I entered the political arena with a volley of questions. I knew my facts, and was inordinately flattered when the chairman remarked with some irritation that "notice ought to have been given of this very severe cross-examination." What with our excitement at finding a meeting on, and pushing in with the crowd, we had forgotten Hurry's existence, and when we emerged he was nowhere to be seen. He was an exceptionally sagacious dog however, and Violet declared that as in his place she would go back to the four crossroads we had passed just before reaching the town and wait, no doubt we should find him there. And sure enough, there he was, sitting motionless and staring with all his eyes down the Helston road.

Many years afterwards Violet met Lord Courtney and asked him if he remembered that Home Rule meeting? He replied: "Most vividly," and told her he had often wondered who the questioner was. If not too polite he might have added "in such an extraordinary get-up," for the talent so many women possess of presenting a workmanlike and at the same time pleasing appearance has been denied me. When I rang at the front door of the house my dear Mrs. Benson had lived in when her husband was Bishop of Truro, the footman politely informed me the back door was round there behind the laurel bushes.

As regards climbing and what are called risky adventures, Dick and I were of one mind and body. I particularly remember a visit to one of those tin mines that run for miles under the sea. Clad in revolting garments that greasy clay had stiffened to the texture of

armour, we clambered down a narrow shaft by a perpendicular ladder, the rungs of which were coated with the same deposit. The descent seemed interminable. All the time a huge vertical beam, the mine pump I believe, rose and fell, groaning and throbbing, within nine inches of our shrinking backs; and as we passed gallery after gallery, pinpoints of light fastened themselves on to the beam or were shed in passing, as men kept stepping on and off this agitating moving ladder.

In the meantime, while Dick and I were in the bowels of the earth, Violet was having a nice little experience about which hangs the peculiar odour of dissenting circles. Getting bored with waiting, she decided to go home, and an overseer of some sort kindly offered to show her the road; but on the way his attentions became so pressing that the situation needed firmness and presence of mind. As they approached the village, however, this unpleasant individual begged her to fall behind and follow him from a distance, lest to be seen walking with a strange young lady might compromise him!! . . .

But far and away the most vivid of our Cornish impressions — indeed, one of the supreme memoirs of my life — is a celebrated cave in the Scilly Islands called “the Piper’s Hole,” the mouth which is only just above high-water mark; and as the passage you are invited to enter runs down hill in a fairly steep incline, you start in a far from neutral frame of mind. Turning to the right, you are in complete darkness, and the first of a bundle of torches is lit and stuck in an iron ring fixed in the cave wall, while the thunder of boulders pushed to and fro by the breakers seems hardly three feet above your head. As you go on, the passage winds and narrows, and ever fresh torches are stuck into further rings, till the walls meet in a V point and you think this is the end of all things. Not at all; you squeeze through a crevice, the last torch is kindled, and lo! a second cave, its floor a little blue fresh-water lake full of fishes. The guide waves his torch to and fro, almost touching the surface, but without disturbing the quiet circling movement below; then you realize with a slight shock that these tiny silver fishes are blind. And to complete a vision of the underworld that might belong in the Eleventh Book of the *Odyssey*, there, on the other side, attached to a massive chain, black and motionless, lies Charon’s boat! . . . A

cleft in the rugged dome was pointed out to us, and we were told that it led by difficult tortuous ways to the land above and was negotiable with the aid of ladders and ropes; but seeing on our faces a strong desire to try it, the guide hastily added: "So I've heard tell, but I daresay there's no truth in it!" And unfortunately we had no time to put the matter to the test.

Other abiding impressions of Cornwall are the incredible colour of the serpentine rock all round the promontory, either dark fiery red or dark fiery green; Tintagel, where Dick and I undertook a really perilous climb; the wonderful line of cliffs called Bedruthan Steps, against which gigantic waves for ever dash, no matter what the weather, as they do on the coast of Clare; and finally the Vale of Lanherne, of which it may be said that one thing alone conveys an idea of such beauty — the name. There is a large Roman Catholic convent there, with a fine picture or two in the church, and it was pleasant in that ultra-Nonconformist district to hear the nuns spoken of with so much love and admiration.

We all four enjoyed that Cornish tour from beginning to end, but for me it lies in my memory wrapped in a tissue of gold, for many years afterwards the Piper's Hole suggested the scene of the Third Act in my opera *The Wreckers*. Indeed on this tour were gathered the legend and most of the impressions which, passed on to H. B. — as one might hand rough sketches and a palette to a painter — were wrought by him into the libretto he wrote for me.

As for that last scene, I shall probably not live to see my dream realized. These things can only be adequately tackled in countries where there is a genuine popular demand for opera, and consequently a subsidy, part of which is devoted to a thing the public insists on — the production of new works. At Munich in 1914 the most astonishing machinist I ever met brought his genius to bear on the Piper's Hole decoration with enthusiasm, inventing a device for bringing the sea right on to the stage; and the ideal performance of *The Wreckers*, for which I had waited ten years, was to have taken place on February 20, 1915!

But in this country the only necessities of life recognized by our ratepayers are things like drains and water-supply — and thus it will be in England for ever and ever.

CHAPTER XXXVII. *Autumn 1886 to Autumn 1887*

As the time for my return to Leipzig drew near, my mother did what she had often suggested doing and what Lili Wach had urged should be done — she herself wrote to Lisl. What she said I do not know though I can well imagine. The reply was a singularly beautiful letter, written in German. Gentle and implacable, it is mainly an entreaty to my mother to see, and help me to see, that not her own will and action but Fate stood — and must always stand, given the circumstances — between us. And the word I longed for, an assurance that the old faith and affection were still alive, was not to be found in those pages.

I left England in September, going direct to Engelberg, where the Fiedlers were staying. More than a year had passed and Lisl had steadily refused to discuss the reasons of our now notorious breach with any of our common acquaintances. This being so, Conrad decided to constitute himself my champion in Leipzig, more especially since I now felt free to show him certain letters proving that Lisl had been told everything from the first, and that I was guiltless of deception, treachery, or anything that could alienate anyone's sympathies, let alone merit social ostracism; also that if it was a question of apportioning blame for what had happened, others were at least as culpable as I. He thereupon wrote once more to Lisl, demanding as an act of *bare justice* that she should corroborate certain statements he proposed to make in certain quarters; and this time he gained his point.

Meanwhile I again shouldered my pack and started forth on a solitary tramp across the beautiful Joch Pass to visit the Wachs at the Ried. Lili Wach, who feared that a bitter ordeal awaited me at Leipzig and was incapable herself of grasping nettles successfully, was evidently relieved to learn that Conrad was taking action in my behalf, and with the certainty of our passing the winter together I left for Crostewitz.

The return to my old haunts taught me one thing: that human nature is kindlier than pessimists would have one believe. The Fied-

lers told me that many of my old friends, notably Frau Limburger, had refused from the first to believe ill of me; that others had dimly suspected a situation unsuitable to the convenient black-and-white methods of melodrama; and that even those who had cheerfully believed the worst were not sorry to know they were wrong. Perhaps no one likes being taken in too grossly.

But one bitter disappointment awaited me; I ought to have foreseen it perhaps, but — I didn't. Soon after my return the Fiedlers left for Munich via Berlin, and Mary was full of the representations she meant to make Lisl, which, she believed, must surely change the whole situation.

Alas! the result merely showed what, when she chose to put them forth, Lisl's powers of persuasion and fascination could achieve. Up to now the two had been on rather distant terms; there was lack of affinity to start with; moreover when, as was the case with the Fiedlers, a husband interested Lisl more than the wife, she took no pains to conceal the fact — and Mary was accustomed to adulation. But on this occasion, as I read between the lines, she laid herself out to capture the whole position . . . and succeeded. In the pages upon pages I got from Berlin there is not the faintest allusion to the real point at issue, the harshness and brutality with which the breach had been affected, the early attempt to make the Fiedlers drop me, and all the rest of it, nor is my everlasting question: "Does she speak kindly of me?" as much as referred to. On the other hand change upon change is rung on Lisl's tragic and beautiful appearance in mourning (she had recently lost her father), the nobility of her character, the desperate position she was placed in, the inevitableness of our separation, and the sufferings of other persons involved — who as it happened were less than nothing to the writer. Not that my sorrows were forgotten or that I was reproached or blamed in these loving effusions; but the magic of Lisl, acting on an impressionable being for the first time wooed by her and treated as an equal, had caused Mary to forget, or gloss over, everything that was not to her interlocutor's advantage!

Knowing how everyone coveted Conrad's good opinion, far be it from me to blame Lisl for the masterliness with which she conducted what I always called in my mind the "Berlin Congress," including the winning round of my own particular friend, Conrad's

wife. She was not only a great artist musically speaking; there was a quality about her which would have made this frankest, most sincere of beings a superb actress if the stage had been her vocation. When deeply moved she had command of extraordinarily beautiful language, to which her letters, in the original at least, bear witness — letters written at lightning speed with scarce a stumble or an erasure. In conversation her voice, not a striking one as a rule, would then acquire a thrilling metallic ring, her expression a fineness, her gestures a rare grace and beauty, for all their violence, that carried everything before her. No wonder the gratified Mary forgot her brief; even Conrad must have been under the spell, for in a beautiful letter¹ he wrote me from Munich, full of wise counsel, the main issues are not mentioned! Feeling that after all I had been left in the lurch in a matter at least as vital to me as my good name, I wrote bitterly, and presently the interchange of letters ceased.

I settled down in new rooms in the Hauptmannstrasse, the quarter once favoured by the Geistinger. . . . How many of us have stood in a street, wondering, as we gaze up stupidly at certain windows, what our connection is with someone young, keen, and happy who used to stand there doing the same thing! . . . The Geistinger had left Leipzig long since, and the first time I passed her house that autumn three children were laughing and quarrelling in her balcony . . . but there was another street on the other side of the town through which I never passed again. . . . Most of my Saturday and Sunday afternoons were spent at Dölitz, the Limburgers' country house, riding, and playing tennis or bowls according to the weather, Ella, my particular friend, wife of the eldest son, Julius, being in Egypt. I remember that one day I and Clotilde (who had acquired a taste for dangerous games during her stay in England) shot downstairs on a shutter and were rather pleased to find none of her brothers evinced any desire to do likewise. We hoped herewith to have begun the undermining of a prevalent German notion that women are but poor, timid creatures.

In January I flew home to assist at the marriage of my youngest and only unmarried sister to Hugh Eastwood of the K.D.G.'s, on which occasion for the last time in my life I acted as bridesmaid. A

¹ Appendix, p. 405.

week later the couple started for India; Bob, who had been ill, was sent to Egypt in quest of a few months' sunshine; and I returned to Leipzig — in premature possession of some beautiful sapphires my mother had always meant to leave me in her Will.

From February onwards I was no longer alone in my lodgings. Ella Limburger, who had been suffering severely under the doglessness of the East, met in the streets of Vienna, fell in love with, purchased, and brought home a huge sprawling yellow-and-white puppy of the long-haired kind generally seen, dragging washerwomen's carts. Half St. Bernard and the rest what you please, Marco was an entrancing animal, but as there were already three sporting dogs of Julius's about the house, Ella yielded to my passionate entreaties and gave him to me.

For twelve years that dog was the joy of my life, and latterly the terror of my friends. I have had the privilege of rushing to the assistance of Royalty — our most kind and faithful friend the Duke of Connaught — who on endeavouring to leave a note at my cottage had been driven hastily back into the high road by Marco, slamming the wicket just in time. And another old friend, Sir William Butler, declared that nothing would induce him to approach my door unless clad in riding boots. In fact like many other geniuses Marco became nerve-rasped and ferocious in his old age, but in his youth, though always a desperate character, he was wholly amiable, and took to life on the third floor, his head reposing on the pedals of a seldom silent piano, as if washerwomen had never been heard of.

A greater philosopher, a more perfect comrade for a busy woman, can never have existed; if, in the stress of work, I put off his dinner too long, all he did was to shut his eyes and moan very, very softly, like a baby. I gave him a toy, a thing called "Marco's purse" — really a little netted blue bag with long strings, which eventually became a repulsive object but nevertheless travelled with us everywhere, wrapped in fold upon fold of the *Weekly Times*. Sometimes when bored, after many yawns and sighs he would get up and lay his head on my lap; but at the words "Don't bother, Marco," he would stand still, reflecting, then suddenly pounce on his purse, roll over on to his back, hold it up between his paws, and making it sway back-

wards and forwards, alternately catch it in his mouth and let it go again. Having worked off his energy this way, he would get up, lie down very carefully on the exact centre of the purse, and go heavily to sleep — an object-lesson to many human beings.

That February the weather was arctic, a fact linked in my mind with the capricious digestion of young dogs and the frequent necessity of rising from my bed and hastily putting on ulster and slippers in order to conduct poor Marco down to the street. I almost became a Socialist owing to the chivalrous conduct of the second-floor lodger, no less a person than the great Bebel himself, who, finding me shivering in the *porte-cochère* one night, insisted on my going upstairs instantly, and in due course conducted the invalid back to his own quarters. Wherever I went Marco went, and wherever Marco went he made history. I had noticed that sometimes, even without his purse, he would roll over gently on to his back, yawn, and rub his nose with a large yellow paw; this odd trait was developed into a trick called "eat your paw," about which there was something so subtly appealing that even old Frau Limburger, who disliked and dreaded dogs, was melted at the sight.

I never knew a more hilarious temperament than Marco's — so much so that, invited to attend a rehearsal Brahms was holding of his Piano Quintet at the flat of Brodsky, the violinist, it seemed advisable for once to leave him in the street. I was seated at the piano turning over, when suddenly the door burst open and with a bound Marco was beside me, while the cellist's desk, taken in his stride, went crash. Having spoken disparagingly of the great man's sense of humour, it is only fair to say he rose to this occasion and declared the whole thing took him back to the Harlequinades of his youth. . . . During the two bereft winters I spent in Leipzig, anything more markedly kind, fatherly, and delicate than Brahms's manner to me cannot be imagined; but I had always known that with all his faults he had a heart of gold.

What chiefly remains in my memory concerning that first critical winter is the wonderful kindness shown me. My great trouble was mentioned to no one except Lili Wach, and I am thankful to think that in after years I was able in some measure to make up for what must have been a painful spell of her life. If three people have

been in closest alliance, and two of these are violently separated, each still clinging to the third, the situation of that third is not an enviable one — more especially in the case of a temperament so unwarlike, so delicate and shrinking, that among the many nick-names bestowed by me upon her, the favourite and most appropriate was “the Sensitive Plant.” Yet behind all, carefully dissimulated in ordinary life, was what the other lacked, passion; that is why her friendship was so satisfying in deep waters. Nevertheless endless discussions that led to nothing wore us out, and eventually, though she never gave up hope of better times coming, we avoided by mutual consent the subject that was in the forefront of both our minds.

Looking back through those months, many and many a sudden grip of a friendly hand do I recall — trifles light as air but which made all the difference. For instance I remember how Julius Limburger, the prodigal son of the family — a young man much criticized in Leipzig but whom I always loved for his kind heart — took me by the arm one day and said in his rough fashion: “Now look here, you are still young, hang it all, and I won’t have you moping like this; you’re to come to the next Gewandhaus ball, mind that!” And I did go to the ball, for the first time since many years, and Julius made it his business to smother me in partners from start to finish.

But I think with most delight of a sudden touch of humour in dear simple Frau Röntgen. Her great worth of character had always impressed and attracted me, but that winter deepened and intensified my feeling, such a friend did she prove herself, so sure and delicate was her instinct how and when to help. Some acquaintance of hers was in trouble and she spoke of it, adding: “but you never liked her, I know.” I said: “I don’t dislike anyone who is unhappy,” whereupon Frau Röntgen remarked cheerfully: “My dear Ethel, don’t tell me you have developed into a *Thränen Lise*” (tearful Lise) — “that’s not at all your line, believe me!” — the allusion being to an exceedingly dull old spinster whose speciality was to weep with the afflicted no matter on how slight an acquaintance. This little joke was like a breath of fresh air in the Catacombs. On another occasion, when I sang her a particularly cheerful little song I had just composed, she clapped me on the shoulder and said: “So eine

Musik lass' ich mir von Ihnen gefallen!" (That's the sort of music I like to hear from you).

There was one case of wobbling which I record, firstly because it ended well, and secondly because it was characteristic and funny, though I did not feel amused at the time. During my year in England Frau Livia had made no sign — which was not surprising, for we did not correspond regularly and she was not one to rush on the horns of a dilemma; but when she learned I was returning to Leipzig she wrote, not exactly unkindly, but urging me to stay away, on the ground that girls of whom certain things had been said — *whether deservedly or not* — did well to remain "*unterm Schutz des elterlichen Daches*" (under the protection of the home roof). And the finishing touch, I thought, was a suggestion that I should compose the Psalm about the waters going over one's head, on which theme she felt certain I should "produce a masterpiece"!!

Like Bonnemaman I kept a draft of my furious reply, the gist of which was that I had done nothing disgraceful and should most certainly come back. As for "the conflict of duties" for herself which she mentioned, she could be quite easy in her mind, since wild horses would not drag me across her doorstep. The tone of the letter was true to the deep affection and respect I bore her, but dynamite was not lacking and it must have pulverized her for the moment. Nevertheless in my heart I felt sorry for this German equivalent of an Early Victorian lady, temperamentally as incapable of understanding complicated situations as a child of ten; and when I really turned up, Conrad's activities having preceded me, I got a dear note begging me to go and see her. Of course I went at once, was met by two outstretched arms, and not only was all well, but I think the incident brought home to us how deeply we were attached to each other in a region that no passing differences can affect — the region of elective affinity.

When I returned to England that summer Marco had a colossal success — except perhaps with my little nieces and nephews, who having learned what his duties would have been had he remained in his own station of life, naturally expected him to drag their go-carts. But this, unfortunately, was the one and only request he refused to comply with, having I suppose seen enough of that sort of



Marco and the Author, 1891

thing in days gone by. Strangers used to ask curiously what breed he was, and when I casually answered: "Oh, he's a *Wiener-Hund*" they looked knowing and were quite satisfied. Mother adored him, even when he lay under a certain wicker table at tea-time and, getting up, walked about as under a canopy, bearing plates and tea-cups. As at Leipzig, he went everywhere with me, and one night at the Edward Clives', when there was a fight under the dinner table between Marco and the Clive dog, I remember the presence of mind displayed by beautiful Violet Howard, Lilla Clive's sister, who, seizing her full glass of champagne, leaped up on her chair and stood there — a bewitching vision in green and gold.

One feat of Marco's, and it shall be the last, I cannot refrain from recording. In the schoolroom there was one of those old-fashioned bookcases in two sections, consisting of a cupboard below, about three and a half feet high, and four shelves on the top — between the two parts a six-inch ledge. You placed a glove on the top shelf and Marco would leap on to the ledge, change feet in a flash, rear up, snap the glove, and descend with his back to the bookcase. I never saw a heavy domestic dog capable of such a performance, though Charlie Hunter once had a dapple-grey cob that could have done it on the side of a house built to scale.

During these years I have been reviewing, Bob had been through Wellington and afterwards with an Army coach; but being like myself bad at examinations, he failed to pass, and was now doing militia training at Guildford with a view to getting into the Army by the back door. None of a family devoted to scenery cares about it more than he, so we determined to explore the Wye country in the price-less company of Marco.

The peculiarity of walking-tours is, that for the reason quoted from Barrès, one is as entrancing as another, provided you plan them properly. True, there was no sea this time, no Piper's Hole, but it was England's beauty in a fresh aspect and that was enough. All the same, what I chiefly remember (besides the fact that in these mountainous districts the butcher's cart only goes round once a week and that we never managed to hit off the day) is a curious occasion when solitude gave the stimulating screw-up supplied usually by the presence of a gallery. We had climbed up inside an old

ruinous tower on a hill, all broken blocks of stone and ivy, when Bob, who hadn't a particularly good head, declined to go any higher; I went onwards and upwards and found, as often happens, that getting down again was quite another thing. It really was a nasty place, and after I had sat for twenty minutes or so trying to pump up courage, Bob started for some cottages about a mile off to fetch a ladder. But before he was out of sight, left alone with an intolerable sense of humiliation, the descent suddenly seemed possible, and was accomplished without catastrophe.

At one period of our tour we were due to spend a couple of days with Sybella Lady Lyttelton, sister of General Edward Clive, who, with Lilla, was of the party, and arrived in time for tea after a six hours' tramp in a real Herefordshire downpour. We had nothing with us but what we stood up in, and our physical formation — fairly normal I should have thought — was apparently such that no one's clothes fitted us; or perhaps we preferred wandering about swathed in blankets while our own were in the oven. This was the first time Marco had stayed in a strange house, and in honour of the occasion he did a thing he had never done before — lay down on the sofa of the room he was shut in, and alas! snapped a beautiful fan of Lilla's in half (a crime she remembered against him ever after).

Among the visitors was the great Mr. Lowell, and I found him superior and inclined to pontificate. There is something even in the writings of Victorian men of that moral-lecturing type, Martin Tupper, O. W. Holmes of the breakfast-cups, and others, that suggests the holder-forth unaccustomed to being "taken up" — as the nurses of my day put it — and I remember kind Lady Lyttelton looking rather perturbed when the pronouncements of her great Friend and Authority were challenged by Youth and Ignorance.

If my recollections of this tour are rather meagre, it is perhaps because I was waiting for a letter — a frame of mind which does not preclude receiving, but is against retaining impressions. In the course of the summer I had learned that Herzogenberg was suffering from a strange malady supposed to be rheumatic but which the doctors half feared might be tubercular. An operation at Munich dissipated this dread, and presently I learned that ere long he would be as well as ever, but for a stiff knee, and able to resume his duties at Berlin.

It seemed impossible not to express to Lisl my past distress and present relief; and thinking that deliverance from the shadow of the first real sorrow she had ever been threatened with might have softened her mood, I asked if we could not meet by and by, just once, after which I would contentedly go back into the desert. . . .

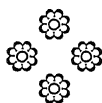
On our return to Frimhurst I found her reply awaiting me — a strange stiff epistle in which my name is not once mentioned, written too in English, a language she never used when discussing serious subjects. She was still very anxious about her husband, she said, and begged me not to complicate her life by appeals and suggestions that could only enervate and distress. . . . She was not, and never had been unfaithful to our past; Fate, not her will, separated us, and it was unfair to make her “responsible for the sorrow resultant therefrom.” In conclusion I was asked not to try to make her say more than that, for she was “resolved not to.” . . .

Perhaps I judged this letter too harshly at the time, for through the frozen trickle of words which was all that fear or loyalty to others permitted, I now see a certain attempt to convey that she too was unhappy. But the unmistakable accent that turns stripes into caresses was lacking, and — why had she written in English? Suddenly it flashed across me that it was in order to avoid the intimate German *du!* . . . I may have wronged her, but I still see no other explanation.

This was the last communication I ever had from her, and with it began the bitterest epoch in my experience; for though, as will be shown, I had reacquired a certain grip on life and work, it seemed to me I might some day find myself hating Lisl.

There are people who appear to find a relief and a solution in hatred; perhaps because it has a false air of showing character and facing facts. I think I always felt dimly that this apparently strong, healthy growth is in reality the child of stupidity and sterility; yet it took me years to understand that if the implacable not only repel but inspire pity — and a touch of contempt — it is because they are dead and do not know it . . . the charnel-house masquerading in the Pageant of Life. And if the generous attract and uplift — even when difficult to live with, like my mother — it is because these are really alive, and the only fit company for the living. I hadn't yet got as far as hatred; it was rather that the Centre of Indifference seemed

to have been reached. The old tenderness would still "tread softly round and gaze at me from far," but it was becoming easier to drive that gentle ghost away. Thus month by month the sadness within deepened, and this was the mood in which what turned out to be my last winter in dear Leipzig was lived.



CHAPTER XXXVIII. *Autumn 1887 to Spring 1888*

ALMOST immediately after our return from the Wye, Bob and I again started forth in each other's company, this time for Germany, where it was his laudable intention to learn German, one of the most difficult of languages, in three months! But anyhow the admission that knowledge of foreign tongues might come in useful in a soldier's career was something to be thankful for; a few years back, good linguists like my friend Captain Hubert Foster had been looked upon almost as decadents, certainly as doubtful chips of the old John Bull block. At my advice Bob put himself under the wing of Johanna Röntgen, who had a perfect passion for teaching anybody anything (as also for learning herself), and of course they began their studies with *Egmont*, the one play of "our Goethe" calculated to appeal to a budding soldier.

In Johanna's spare hours she taught drawing and I think the Bible at an infant school for threepence an hour or some such sum, and towards Christmas I remember she showed me with great pride some little cardboard models of Leipzig and district made by her pupils — an excellent way of teaching them to observe. It seemed, though, that each model had an inordinate number of poles with *Verboten* placards, and I pointed this out to Johanna, adding in my folly that it was rather a shame to drag the *Verboten* bogie into these wretched infants' games, thereby checking healthy instincts of rebellion without which every child is a bore. But Johanna replied triumphantly that I evidently knew very little about children — German children anyway — for as it happened those *Verboten*

poles were to them the supreme ecstasy of the thing. "The only difficulty," she added, "is to stop them putting one at each end of the Grimmasche Strasse" — this being a great highway that cuts the town east and west, in fact the Oxford Street of Leipzig!

I have often said to myself that nothing illustrates the difference between the Germans and ourselves more perfectly than this little incident, except perhaps another that does not belong in the eighties, but which I must stretch a point to record here as natural sequence to the Johanna method.

Kreisler, who of course is an Austrian, was once travelling with his wife from Rome to Naples when, as so often happens in the Campagna, the train pulled up three or four miles out of Rome for the reason that a herd of bullocks were reposing on the line. At this moment Kreisler noticed that his famous Stradivarius had been left behind at the hotel; uttering imprecations he hurled himself out on to the line, made his wife pitch out their hand baggage, including violin No. II, and then received her flying form in his arms, the floor of the carriage being about four and a half feet above the ground. All this time their two fellow travellers, Germans, had been ceaselessly expressing their scandalization, reminding the young Austrian that to get out between the stations was "*strengstens verboten*," Kreisler in his agitation not even bothering to reply. Suddenly, as the engine gave a piercing and prolonged whistle — less alarming in Italy than elsewhere, for there are many stages yet to come — Frau Kreisler's bag was seen to be missing. "Hand me down that bag on the middle seat please — quick," said Kreisler. "I shall do nothing of the sort," replied one of the Germans, and slammed the door. Whereupon Kreisler, swarming up the side of the carriage, wrenched the door open, pushed past the German, and while the train was slowly getting into its stride jumped after the bag to the ground. He told me he should never, never forgive himself for not having punched the head of the man who slammed the door, and being of a passionate temperament, got quite white when he spoke of the incident, which had happened at least three years previously.

Early in the music season I at last met the great violinist Sarasate in private life, and was amazed to find this sad, tragic, romantic-looking man literally bubbling over with fun. That evening he had

stepped for a moment into a *Carmen* performance and went into peals of laughter at the idea of any public accepting our admirable but hideous prima donna Moran-Olden as Carmen; although he greatly disliked Germans, it was well worth coming to Germany, he said, to see such a *traite de mœurs*. Talking to him I realized for the first time that though Spaniards thoroughly endorse Mérimée's story, on which the libretto is based, the treatment of it in the opera infuriates them, as does also the mitigated French handling of their desperate national rhythms. I knew too little of Spanish music to contest the point and as I love *Carmen* hope this is a purity of feeling to which only Spaniards need aspire; but all musically cultivated countrymen of his I have met since are of the same opinion as Sarasate.

As regards another audacious foreigner's work, Gounod's *Faust*, revived that winter in Leipzig, my life in Germany had been one long battle from the first, the banalization of their great play being a crime the Germans are unable to forgive, though there as elsewhere the only people who matter, the gallery, love the music in spite of themselves. Connoisseurs like the Herzogenbergs and the Röntgens, while grudgingly allowing the "relative" beauty of some of the music, asked how any cultivated person who knew Goethe could sit out the opera? I wonder what they would have said to an English version of the play produced by Irving in the eighties, in the course of which Faust informs Mephistopheles that he intends to make an honest woman of Margaret, but is persuaded by the other to drop the idea! Whether this amazing interpolation was a concession to English prudery or a gratuitous piece of hypocrisy I never made out. As managers are wild to get the sympathies of the audience with the hero and heroine at any cost, it may have been put in to prove that Faust had a better nature — unfortunately counteracted by Mephistopheles. Anyhow it was one of those occasions on which one murmurs: "Alas my country!"

I think it was in November that Fanny Davies and Brodsky played a Violin Sonata of mine in the "Kammermusik," and Bob remembers the critics unanimously said it was devoid of feminine charm and therefore unworthy a woman — the good old remark I was so often to hear again. Lucy Tait, Edith Davidson's sister, who was passing through Leipzig at that moment, and whom her brother-in-

law the Dean had described as one of those people who never miss a train but always come by the next, arrived in the middle of the first movement (very good time-keeping for her) and was ushered through a back entrance on to the platform itself in full view of the whole audience — a severe punishment for one of a particularly retiring disposition. Our Christmas was spent at the Limburgers' — sequel to many delightful Saturday and Sunday afternoons at Dölitz in the late autumn. The way the brother was admitted as a matter of course into the bosom of this and other families at that intimate season shows how wide and delicate was the German reading of friendship for the sister. He himself became quite sentimental over it, and no wonder.

All this time I was wishing to goodness he would apply himself more assiduously to the task of learning German, and above all regretted his absurd passion for music, which resulted in his going night after night to concerts and the opera instead of following my old plan of attending the drama. . . . Alas, there was no youthful Geistinger to keep him up to the mark! When we both went back to England in the middle of January, I for a fortnight's hunting, he for good and all, I felt that it was in some obscure way my fault that he hadn't learned more; but he has since assured me that it was not for lack of being worried almost to death on the subject by me.

The great frost of February and March 1888 I shall always remember because of a rather horrible skating adventure I had. The country round about Leipzig, as all students of Napoleon's campaigns know, is intersected by countless little rivers — one dirtier and more sluggish than the other — which however atone for their existence by flowing through beautiful woods. Consequently this year, the ice being in places three feet thick, the skater was in Paradise. One moonlight evening a party of some eight or ten of us started forth down the river, had supper in a woodland restaurant thrown open in this unexpected burst of winter prosperity, and timed our return so as to be back in Leipzig about eleven p.m. On the way home one of my skates got loose, and a nice shy English boy called Mynors, son of a clergyman, having stopped to help me, we two and Marco fell behind the rest. Flying along to catch them up, the thermometer any number of degrees below zero, suddenly I found myself in the river (about four and a half feet deep just

there), my skates well embedded in the muddy bottom! It was a gully of warm water flowing out of a factory hidden away in the trees, and skinned over with ice.

I wish I could relate that Marco flew to my assistance, but as a matter of fact he stuck in his toes, slid a yard or two, and hurriedly made for the bank, where, in spite of commands and entreaties, he sat down — actually sat down — and watched the proceedings dispassionately. On either side of me the ice was eighteen inches thick, but the gully was too wide to lift oneself out, nor could Mr. Mynors get purchase enough to take a pull. Eventually we hit upon a brilliant idea, which was that I, exhausted and half frozen to death, should make one final leaping heave upwards, turning as I rose, while Mr. Mynors, aiming the point of his stick at the buckle of my Norfolk jacket, was to give a mighty prod and shove. Painful as it sounds, the manœuvre was a success, and presently I was on my back on firm ice, but before the bank was reached my petticoats were stiff and clanking.

It was no time to sit down and fiddle with skates, one of mine being half off already, so we linked arms and jog-trotted the four miles to Leipzig. But as ill luck would have it my landlady was attending a wedding supper and alas! there was nothing in my room by way of stimulant except half a bottle of lager beer! . . . I begged Mr. Mynors to fly at top speed to a restaurant for some brandy, got into bed, and lay there, dreading a return of one of my violent illnesses, for I was shivering to such an extent that the bed shook under me. At last, after what seemed to me an eternity, came a knock; then a hand appeared, stiffly holding out a bottle! . . . Quite exasperated by this untimely display of English prudishness, I thundered to the poor boy, who probably had never seen a woman in bed in his life, to come in at once — which he did with a reluctance that even then amused me. And the point of the story, showing what the human body can assimilate under certain conditions, is that I drank about a pint of most villainous raw spirit at a draught, fell instantly into a drunken sleep, and woke up next day without even a headache.

In the March of that year I sent Joachim the Violin Sonata, hoping that though it had been mercilessly slated by the press, he

might perhaps be of a different opinion and see his way to performing it in London. I recommend his answer ¹ to the attention of any young musician assured by a great authority that he has no talent, for this, according to Joachim, was my case; he added a hope that I would not resent his expressing this conviction (which by the by he solemnly retracted twelve years later when I didn't care two straws what he thought), and comforted himself by reflecting that if my musical bent was genuine it would survive his lack of appreciation. I felt this was true, and the day came when I was glad never to have been among his favourites; as a rule pedantry and total absence of the sacred spark were their chief characteristics, and with very, very few exceptions they all fizzled out in after life. Still the letter was not an agreeable one to receive, particularly at that moment, and one little dig at him I allowed myself. I said that of course an honest opinion could never be resented, but at the same time I much wondered if he considered Mr. So-and-So a genuine talent — this being a youth never heard of before or since, whose deadly dull Opus 1 he had recently produced in London, and whose mama was a giver of smart musical parties, at which the Joachim Quartet performed about once a fortnight, for fabulous fees, throughout the season. This letter received no reply.

All this time I had been seeing a great deal of the von Webers, people I had met off and on in Leipzig society for many years, but who, though cultivated and musical, were not in the sacred Herzenberg set. Weber, a Captain in the Leipzig regiment, was either grandson or nephew of the composer, and his wife a Jewess, niece of old Madame Schwabe's; but what gave special point to intercourse with this couple was the constant presence in their house of Weber's great friend, Count Paul Vizthum, a Saxon officer on the Headquarters Staff. But for the fact that I knew he was deeply in love with a young married woman, a friend of mine, I think I should have completely succumbed to the charm of Vizthum, a sort of Bayard nearer forty than thirty, not exactly handsome but of a magnificent presence and a *grand seigneur*. These three got into the habit of coming to supper with me — a supper of cold ham and beer, though sometimes one of the party would bring a *pâté de foie*

¹ Appendix, p. 407.

gras or a particularly admirable sausage, and on one occasion (somebody's birthday) there was champagne. Now I come to think of it the spectacle must have been unusual — these immense Saxon officers tramping up three pairs of stairs to my door, depositing their helmets and swords and all the rest of it on my piano, and settling down to a frugal meal with a musical student, just for the sake of a little pleasant talk.

I never met any of the trio again, though sometimes I seem to remember a passing glimpse of Vizthum at Dresden, but the poor Webers' subsequent history was tragic. Gustav Mahler, who was then one of the conductors at the Leipzig Opera, fell in love with her and his passion was reciprocated — as well it might be, for in spite of his ugliness he had demoniacal charm. A scandal would mean leaving the Army, and Weber shut his eyes as long as was possible, but Mahler, a tyrannical lover, never hesitated to compromise his mistresses. Things were getting critical when one day, travelling to Dresden in the company of strangers, Weber suddenly burst out laughing, drew a revolver, and began taking William Tell-like shots at the head-rests between the seats. He was overpowered, the train brought to a standstill, and they took him to the police station raving mad — thence to an asylum. He had always been considered rather queer in the Army, and the Mahler business had broken down his brain. I afterwards heard he had lucid intervals, that his wife in an agony of remorse refused to see her lover again . . . and the rest is silence.

Mahler's life was full of incidents of this sort, and knowing him even as slightly as I did I can well believe it, not being able to conceive that any woman who loved and was loved by him could resist him. I felt this even when I saw him last (it was at Vienna in 1907), worn out, exasperated, prematurely aged, wrestling with the Hapsburgs as personified by the Intendant of the Opera House he had made the first in the world. He was far and away the finest conductor I ever knew, with the most all-embracing musical instinct, and it is one of the small tragedies of my life that just when he was considering the question of producing *The Wreckers* at Vienna they drove him from office. When he was gone even his enemies regretted their action; but the ideal of art he set, his passionate re-

fusal to abate one jot or tittle of his artistic demands, the magnitude and purity of his vision, these are things that start a tradition and linger after sunset. . . . At the time I am speaking of in Leipzig I saw but little of him, and we didn't get on; I was too young and raw then to appreciate this grim personality, intercourse with whom was like handling a bomb cased in razor-edges. But later on, when years had endowed me with seeing eyes, I thought with deep sympathy of poor Frau von Weber — whom he probably considered a mere passing fancy!

Throughout the greater part of the winter of 1887-8 the Griegs were in Leipzig and it is then that my real friendship with them began. When Grieg appeared on a platform, whether alone or accompanying his wife's superb rendering of his songs, the audience went mad, but there was a simplicity and purity of spirit about them that success could not tarnish. Out of action, these two tiny people looked like wooden figures from a Noah's Ark, the transfiguration which ensued when they got to work being all the more astonishing. Frau Grieg sang in Norwegian of course and one often had only a vague idea as to the meaning of the words, but her performance was, as Vernon Lee once said about someone else's singing, "explosive literature," and one wept, laughed, and thrilled with excitement or horror without knowing why. The song over, she again became Noah's wife. Grieg is one of the very few composers I have met from whose lips you might hear as frank a confession as he once made concerning one of his later-works. I had been so enthusiastic, and he was always so keen to get at honest impressions, that I ventured to say the coda of one of the movements seemed not quite up to the level of the rest. "Ah, yes!" he said, shrugging his shoulders, "at that point inspiration gave out and I had to finish without!" I remember too on a certain occasion his being invited for a huge sum to conduct not only his own work but the whole programme, and refusing on the ground that he was too bad a conductor. "But the public won't mind that," pleaded the manager, "they'll come to see you conduct: besides which, as you conduct your own music you surely can get along with other people's well enough for all purposes?" At this remark Grieg shook his pale yellow mane angrily.

"My own music?" he snapped; "any fool can conduct his own music, but that's no reason for murdering other people's" — and the manager had to drop the subject.

But of all the composers I have known, the most delightful as personality was Tchaikovsky, between whom and myself a relation now sprang up that surely would have ripened into close friendship had circumstances favoured us; so large-minded was he that I think he would have put up unresentingly with all I had to give his work — a very relative admiration. Accustomed to the uncouth, almost brutal manners affected by many German musicians as part of the make-up and one of the symptoms of genius, it was a relief to find in this Russian, who even the rough diamonds allowed was a master on his own lines, a polished cultivated gentleman and man of the world. Even his detestation of Brahms's music failed to check my sympathy — and that I think is strong testimony to his charm! He would argue with me about Brahms by the hour, strum passages on the piano and ask if they were not hideous, declaring I must be under hypnotic influence, since to admire this awkward pedant did not square with what he was kind enough to call the soundness of my instinct on other points. Another thing that puzzled him was my devotion to Marco, of whom he was secretly terrified, but this trait he considered to be a form of English spleen and it puzzled him less than the other madness. For thirty years I have meant to enquire whether dogs play no part in the Russian scheme of life or whether Tchaikovsky's views were peculiar to himself; anyhow it amused me, reading his memoirs, to find Marco and Brahms bracketed together as eccentricities of his young English friend.

On one point we were quite of one mind: the neglect in my school, to which I have already alluded, of colour; "not one of them can instrumentate" he said, and he earnestly begged me to turn my attention at once to the orchestra and not be prudish about using the medium for all it is worth. "What happens," he asked, "in ordinary conversation? If you have to do with really live people, listen to the inflections in the voices — there's instrumentation for you!" And I followed his advice on the spot, went to concerts with the sole object of studying orchestral effects, filled notebook upon notebook with impressions, and ever since have been at least as

much interested in sounds as in sense, considering the two things indivisible.

I must not forget to record one more strange manifestation of the German spirit witnessed during that spring of 1888 — an incident of the same order as the scenes with the peppery stationer and the egregious Commandant of the Leipzig garrison, but more astounding even than these, in that the hero was one of my most intimate friends.

It will be remembered that most of the great German doctors had pronounced the Crown Prince's malady to be cancer, and that Sir Morell Mackenzie, called in by the Crown Princess, was of a different opinion. No one who was not in Germany at that moment can realize the lengths to which an inspired press will go, the least of the charges brought against this noble woman being that the whole thing was a plot between her and Morell Mackenzie to secure her the pension of a German Empress, inasmuch as an heir stricken with a mortal disease might possibly be excluded from succession!

One day, at the height of this disgraceful business, I was lunching at the Wachs', Lili as it turned out being ill in bed, and naturally I imagined that Wach would share my horror and distress. Not at all! The discussion began fairly temperately, by his asking me how English doctors would have liked it had the Prince Consort been similarly afflicted and a German doctor called in to reverse their decision. I replied that though they would in all probability have hated it, such a scandal as this malignant press campaign was absolutely unthinkable in England. But my remarks were brushed aside angrily, Wach's voice rose and rose, so did mine, and finally when I said: "but after all she is an English Princess," he bounded up, rushed round to my side of the table, and vociferated — his clenched fist within three inches of my nose: "How *dare* you say she is an English Princess? she married our Crown Prince and is a German — a GERMAN — a GERMAN!! do you understand?"

At this point all the children fled from the table, pelted down the corridor, and as I learned afterwards burst into their mother's room, half in terror, half in wild delight, screaming: "*Mama! Mama! der Papa schlägt die Ethel!*" (Papa is hitting Ethel). . . . Meanwhile I too had jumped up, and declaring I would not stand being spoken

to like that by anybody, rushed into the corridor, seized hat and coat, banged the door behind me, and struggling into my garments, rushed down the three flights of stairs into the street. But hardly was I fifty yards from the house when I heard my name being called, and there was the Professor, table napkin in hand, tearing after me, his longish stiff dark hair standing erect in the wind. Being devoted to him, of course I accepted his apologies without difficulty, and was led back in triumph to the deserted luncheon table; the children, a little disappointed that, after all, murder had not been done, were collected again and the meal went on in peace. But my amazement at this extraordinary display survives undiminished to the present hour.

APPENDIX V

[A]

From Dr. Conrad Fiedler

[Translation]

Munich: January 3, 1887.

Dear Miss Ethel, — Why I am writing to you instead of Mary is partly because she is not well and I greatly doubt if you will get the long-expected letter before you start for England. She began it, and fragments of it are lying in her blotter, but she hesitated to finish and despatch it. It is impossible to portray certain complicated inward conditions with clearness and certainty, and every such attempt is fraught with the danger of doing violence to intricate conflicts of sensations such as these. In fact it is a hopeless task, and the more conscientious you are, the more you shrink from trying to formulate what can only be felt and guessed. I only saw parts of the letter Mary wrote you from Berlin, but doubt if she could add anything to it in compliance with your demand for absolute clearness in this matter.

She saw Frau von Herzogenberg oftener than I did, but in our first interview I at once gained a different picture of her attitude and state of mind to that based on impressions gathered from you, and I cannot deny that I was glad it was so; had it been otherwise it would have distressed me greatly. But do not think that for that reason I have lost imagination for your position, or weakened in the sense of justice that has prompted me from the first to defend your attitude and actions against misconstruction, and resent the imputation to you of unworthy motives, or points of view which are not yours. Only I think that in certain points you yourself are unjust; firstly in that you charge Frau von H. with having miserably betrayed and sacrificed you and your character to her own people; then, again, in that you ask her to reduce the intricate tangle of feelings and duties which, without fault of her own, she finds herself involved in, to a question of one or two fixed possibilities; and lastly in that you press for a decision which, matters being as they are, cannot be arrived at.

Impressions that Remained

You say the present state of things cannot continue; but as I see the matter you cannot look to any change from without — only to finding strength in yourself to begin life over again in a certain sense. I realize profoundly the anguish of the inward experience to which you have been, and still are, subjected; it is one of those situations in which existence itself is at stake — an ordeal in which a nature either survives or goes under. But you yourself say you are conscious of a reserve of strength. Meanwhile, in order to aid your powers to new development you ask to be delivered from a state of certainty which, alas! is inherent in the nature of the case! . . .

Your inward relations with Frau von Herzogenberg have perforce lost their simplicity, their limpidity, their innocence; that fact cannot be altered. It is neither a question of the old affection surviving, or of its ceasing; what has happened is a clouding-over (*Verdunkelung*) of the whole relation which cannot be got rid of. I see no way out of it but that you find strength to close with the past, and instead of wearing yourself out seeking the solution of an insoluble problem, devote your energies to new aims. Not that I would have you cut out of your existence such an important part of your inner life as your friendship with Frau von H. has been through all these years — that is impossible; but it seems to me you must sink it, like a treasure you possess, in the deepest part of your soul, there to be kept safe till the changes of life, or circumstances themselves, bring it once more to the surface. And then perhaps you will find that this mutual treasure has been faithfully guarded in another breast; but for the moment it is my firm conviction that all attempts to restore a thing that can no longer subsist as it did formerly can only be disastrous. Meanwhile the calm you need in order to find yourself again, to work, and in the fullest sense of the word to live, is only to be looked for from yourself, not from explanations others can give you.

With kind greetings and best love from Mary, who will finish and send off her letter to you to England,

Yours very sincerely,
CONRAD FIEDLER

In the Desert

[B]

From Joseph Joachim

[Translation]

Berlin: March 22, 1888.

Honoured Miss Smyth, — I have been here for a couple of days conducting a Memorial Festival and return to London today. I had been unable to try over your Trio there, but ran through it here yesterday, as far as it is possible to play such a difficult piece at first sight. I am sorry to say I have gained no other opinion to that I gave you in Leipzig, either as regards the Trio, or the Sonata, which I played through again with Miss Davies. In spite of talent here and there, many a clever turn, and a certain facility, candour compels me to say that both works seem to me failures — unnatural, far-fetched, overwrought (“*geschraubt*”; literally “*screwed-up*”), and not good as to sound. You say you wonder whether I am “in the same boat with Bernsdorf”;¹ to that I can only reply that I am not acquainted with that gentleman’s æsthetic standpoint, but when two people act similarly it is not always the same thing though it looks like it: “*Si duo faciant idem non est idem*” fits the case perhaps, but as I say, I do not know.

I hope you will not bear me a grudge for my lack of assimilative power. If your creative instinct is genuine it will not perish on that account! Which reflection consoles.

Yours sincerely,
JOSEPH JOACHIM

[C]

From My Mother

(1)

[After my return to Leipzig in 1886]

September 1886. My darling, — Your delightful long letter written the day after the dear first one gladdened my heart more than any

¹ An especially venomous Leipzig critic who had been very scathing about my Sonata.

Impressions that Remained

words could convey; it so completely fulfilled my hopes of what your pluck, resolution and healthy tone of mind would do. You WILL win in the end. . . . I called on Mrs. R. yesterday; she made many enquiries after you and was almost genial, full naturally of her "sweet G.'s" engagement, of the L. diamonds and lace, of the adopted mother's diamonds, the lovely estate in prospect, the bijou house in St. James's, etc.; it was quite nice really to see them so happy. . . . My wedding present to Nelly will be the onyx set and my blue enamel and diamond snake bracelet, as I am going to divide all my jewels among you soon, except the pearls, diamonds, and rings which I will wear to my "dying day," dividing them by Will. You, darling, have the sapphires, the best thing I have next the diamonds, Alice the pearls (that *are* hers already) and Bob the diamonds. The lace I also keep to the last. Give my kindest compliments to all your friends [*here follows list*] specially your present host and hostess² and always think of me as your devoted mother.

N. SMYTH

(2)

Autumn 1886. My Ettie, — I don't half like addressing you to this new place. I did so love your old rooms with the garden opposite; I could always *picture* you to myself there and call the dear image up whenever I liked and now I can't. Do, darling, send me a sketch of the rooms. I am sending you another photo of Bob which I like much better than the Slave-driving one with the cigarette. Have you a pleasant lodging-house keeper where you are? Write me full particulars as soon as you can, as I feel restless till I know all about those new quarters. . . . Nelly is going up to Alice, as at the best the marriage cannot take place this year, and this constant meeting is not fair upon anyone concerned. What with one thing and another the uncertainty of his plans is becoming rather a worry.

We went to — Church to-day to hear Mr. Z. preach. I had never heard him before and was much impressed. He is very powerful but of this earth earthy. I mean that where he is most masterful is in depicting the way we are so easily led into indulging ourselves through shortcomings, or rather superabundance, of

² The Limburgers

In the Desert

fleshly tendencies; and though he is grand in pointing out the remedial and rewarding effect of self-denial for higher aims, his *strength* seems to lie in his wonderful knowledge of the power of temptation over poor human nature and all the wily traps we set ourselves for satisfying or silencing conscience every now and then. I should like you to hear him but I think him too *cru* for general use.³

Do send me word as soon as you can about your dresses; they are quite ready. Would you like anything else put in the box, your plush mantle for instance? Addio carina, *send me the sketch*. . . .

(3)

February 1887. My own darling, — Papa came back yesterday night from seeing our young couple off in the *Euphrates* and brought back a glowing account of everything, a magnificent ship, the cabins so lofty that he could easily stand upright in them with his tall hat on. [*Here follow three pages of details.*] Poor dear things, I do hope they will like India; and now to-morrow Bob starts in the P. & O. ship *Khedive* from Gravesend. Papa takes him down to introduce him to the Captain and I have written to — and — to be kind to him at Malta and in Cairo. . . .

Alice says she never saw a young couple start for India under such favourable auspices as Hugh and Nelly. What that dear Alice has been, advising and packing for the travellers, whose needs she is so well acquainted with, it is impossible to describe — so practical and clear headed. Poor darling, she was nearly voiceless when she arrived, and though that improved she was still very weak and looked very wan and tired when she left us, but I had a letter from her to-day saying she was none the worse and found both her boys better, so I hope her unselfishness will have no unhappy results. If all this last trying time had done nothing else it has shown me more and more what dear, dear good children mine are — what a Darling you were and are to me in all this, so kind, so thoughtful for everyone! and *how* joyful I shall be when I see your dear face again! . . .

³ The clergyman in question, a popular London preacher beloved of the Smart, shortly after went under in connection with a terrible scandal.

Impressions that Remained

(4)

February 1887. My own darling, — I have been waiting since last Wednesday to write to you hoping to hear from Malta of the safe arrival of the travellers and the letters only came this morning. . . . Bob evidently has, like you and Alice, another sense for travelling. . . . Are not these earthquakes terrible in France and Italy? Fancy Lady X⁴ driving one day at the Feast of Flowers at Nice in a Victoria all made of (or covered with) forget-me-nots — harness, reins, vehicle, everything the same — she herself reclining all in moss green in it; and the next day flying in abject terror from Nice in a sable-lined cloak over her nightgown! Your delightful Sunday letter warmed the cockles of my heart; in the first place it was so dear of you to write, tired out as you were, and in the next place it is such a real joy to me to see how you enjoy the possession of the sapphires, and that you have preserved that rich old French setting. I should have liked to *see* you that night, my Darling, at the ball!

We are rather amused with the M.'s just now; you know he is High Sheriff now, and they were both most fearfully offended at Mrs. H. having asked Nina to collect subscriptions from the women of the village for the Jubilee instead of, as he told Nina, asking *the High Sheriff's wife*. Nina aptly answered she supposed it was because they thought Mrs. M. as *High Sheriff's wife* would be fully occupied otherwise; she Nina wished personally that Mrs. M., as being so much the more active of the two just now, *had* been asked! (I don't mean she made this last remark to Mr. H. of course.)

Good-bye, my Darling, this hard frost has made my hand stiff again. . . .

(5)

June 1888. My darling, darling child, — What a lovely birthday present that old silver handle is! I never saw such a beautiful, rich, clear design — those dear little cheery dancing men — it makes one's heart light to look at them! I won't have it put on an umbrella till you come, as Papa keeps saying they must *drill a hole* through to make it firm and the bare idea makes me shudder! . . .

⁴ Our exceedingly stout neighbour of the curious household, whose husband had meanwhile died, and who had married the clerical peer — at last a widower.

In the Desert

I think you are quite right to refuse that musical suggestion. You can't afford to write musical jokes till your name is known, besides which the ordeal of mind and nerves you have gone through the last two years is not calculated to qualify you for light compositions. . . . I shall, we all shall, be so overjoyed to have you *really* with us, *here!* Nearer our hearts you cannot be, but there is something in feeling tangibly that you are! . . .

CHAPTER XXXIX. *Summer 1888 to Summer 1889*

THAT year I left Leipzig late in June with every intention of going back there for the following winter, but as the summer wore on, it became evident that my mother was dreading the emptiness that would soon possess the house, for Bob, her Benjamin, to whom she was specially devoted, had finished his Militia training and was going to yet another crammer in July. Realizing her feelings so wrought on mine that I determined to try a winter in England. I had lots of work waiting to be shaped and plenty of rooms to choose from, so the schoolroom became my studio. . . . There was one dear face at Leipzig that in any case I had never hoped to see again. Frau Röntgen had long been failing under a mortal disease, and in July 1888 she died, leaving a tenderer, more ineffaceable memory in my heart than many with whom I stood in closer relations. Such is the mystery of personality. . . .

It was in that summer that I got bitten with the genealogical craze and started researches that proved to me how useless it would have been, even had the funds been available, to put the Royal College of Heralds on to the job. Nothing shall persuade me that you can expect from outsiders the perseverance necessary in these cases to following up clues, nor conscientiousness enough to refrain from pressing them unduly. Again, none but a member of the family is in a position to collect and exploit the valuable indirect hints that fall from the lips of the elder generation. I used to astonish my father by asking him if he could tell me anything about some half-forgotten great-uncle of his I had found an allusion to somewhere; and as both he and two of my aunts had memories that responded to stimulus, and were not addicted to romancing, the results were sometimes surprising. Nevertheless it took me two years and a visit to Ireland, including hours upon hours spent in the Four Courts at Dublin, to establish a certain missing link in the seventeenth century, and incidentally I discovered that our line was literally held together by Church dignitaries. My relations with Lambeth and Windsor were evidently more in order than might

have been supposed, and I was altogether delighted about our Bishops, having a strong natural affection for the Anglican Church which neither personal scepticism nor an ancient predilection for a celibate priesthood undermined.

Why it offends one if a Bishop's wife insists on having rice pudding placed within reach of her husband lest he should wake up hungry in the middle of the night, whereas the same action on the part of a Cardinal's body-servant would strike one charmingly in a biography, I do not know . . . but so it is. It was therefore with pleasure that in the course of my researches I lit upon evidence proving that an ancestress of ours had been equally doubtful as to the advantages of the Anglican system in that respect.

It appeared that a certain Irish Bishop who had married a Miss Smyth was about to embark on a controversy concerning the Celibacy of the Priesthood with a well-known Roman Cardinal, but just as he was collating his notes for the printer his wife seized them and threw them into the fire, remarking that a man weighed down by the cares of a large family was "no fit antagonist for a nimble-minded unencumbered Cardinal." One wished this very sensible woman had framed William III's Laws concerning Catholics instead of her cousin.

My correspondence with unknown relations in Meath, Westmeath, and Queen's County would fill a bonnet-box, and there was one particular Smyth, head of the X branch, with whom I had a particularly friendly interchange of letters, taking pains to make it on my side as little dreary as the depressing nature of the subject permitted. After this had gone on for quite a year, he having repeatedly said how agreeable it was to find he had such a pleasant kinswoman (sixteenth cousins we may have been), I set sail for Ireland and was invited by him to come and inspect the family portraits. Never shall I forget my surprise and chagrin when towards midnight, after much delightful Smyth talk, settling down comfortably in his chair with pipe and grog handy, he suddenly asked: "And now tell me, who the devil *are* you — *really*?" . . .

It was not a relation, however, but the then Bishop of Down and Connor who called my attention to a gratifying point already referred to; in fact he got quite keen about our ecclesiastical record

and said it was "really amazing to see how generation after generation had produced men remarkable for piety and learning." No suspicion as to other possible reasons for my ancestors' consistent preferment seemed to have crossed his mind — or perhaps he was too polite to mention them. Anyhow it was nice to feel one had piety and scholarship running in one's veins however little there was to show for it; better still to learn "the Smyths seem to have made it a habit to intermarry with attainted families! . . ." After all, then, I had every right to be a rebel!

At length the great genealogical study was ripe for printing by subscription and I confess to being prouder of this opusculum than of most things I have attempted, furnished as it is with pedigrees, catalogues, original documents, and many interesting forgotten facts; moreover of an intrinsic quality to challenge fifty Colleges of Heralds and win me any lawsuit founded on its evidence.

It is a strange thing, this passion for running a heel line after some ancient defunct rabbit such as John Smyth, nonentity, deceased 1702, brother of the most ill-advised Bishop on the whole Episcopal list. An American singer once said to me: "You wouldn't believe it, Doctor *Smeithe*, but I was twenty-three years of age before I knew where my diaphragm really *warze*," and I thought the remark quite mad, holding that no amount of anatomical knowledge will turn a bad singer into a good one. But how much madder this two years' effort to answer satisfactorily Smyth of X's immortal question, "who the devil are you, really?" . . . Nevertheless I thoroughly enjoyed the hunt, and in due course neatly bound copies of the result were forwarded to subscribers and other interested persons, from whom I expected and received much praise. . . . But there was one exception: a cousin, member of the ever critical J. clan, drew my attention to the fact that I had wrongly stated the initials of his grandmother (not a Smyth) as also the date of the birth of one of his nephews (also not a Smyth). I replied that I knew there were other minor errors of this sort besides those he mentioned, and was tabulating them in a page of *Errata* to be placed in all copies; whereupon he answered: "*Errata* indeed; better call it Ethel's stoopid mistakes!" We were amused at this remark but exclaimed in chorus: "*How like a J.!*"

Having brought the story of my great genealogical studies to a conclusion, let me go back to the year in which they were begun.

In the course of this summer (1888) Lili Wach wrote that at last there had been a satisfactory meeting between her and Lisl, who was evidently suffering bitterly under our separation. Frankly I did not believe this. Given her overwhelming desire for harmony, and also the curious humble strain I have spoken of, I felt certain that she must be unhappy under Lili Wach's gentle, inflexible condemnation, and in my answering letter remarked that the *Vox Humana* stop had probably been pulled out, though of course without conscious hypocrisy, for the other's benefit. The reply I received may be quoted as one more illustration of an eternal tragedy — that good advice always comes either too soon or too late. The deep wisdom of that appeal to stifle feelings which evidently were obscuring my memory of Lisl strikes me now, but then it fell on deaf ears. "No fresh flowering of a life," she writes, "can be hoped for in such soil, and believe me, the spirit that tempts you to heal your wound by nourishing bitterness against her personally, is no good spirit. Would it not be better to hold these years of incomparable intercourse, for the loss of which I well know nothing can console you, in sacred remembrance? Granted that a higher love would have stood by you, cannot you say for her what no doubt you have often said for yourself as regards your own shortcomings: *'les détails d'une faute réconcilient avec elle'?*"

This appeal produced a certain effect for the moment, but as the months passed and nothing further happened, I reverted to my conviction that Lisl's "sufferings" were mythical.

And yet in a letter from Mary Fiedler, with whom I had now restarted a fitful correspondence, I find mention of an incident so curious, though at the time it made little impression on me, that one can only say once more the psychology of Lisl defies analysis. It appeared that some six months after the "Berlin Congress" Mary had again seen the Herzogenbergs at Berlin, just at the beginning of his illness. She had found him lying in an armchair in constant pain, and had been greatly shocked at his appearance, and still more at Lisl's apparent gaiety and obliviousness. In the stress of conversation she would even strike his knee rather hard — a frequent gesture of hers when animated — causing him to wince with

pain and cry, half comically, half reproachfully: “. . . but *Lisl!*” Whereupon she would embrace him, ask his pardon, call herself a brute . . . and presently — do it again! Mary thought to herself: “Is she blind? is she heartless?” but when *Lisl* went with her to the door she suddenly burst into tears, flung her arms round Mary’s neck, and said: “Oh, what — *what* is the matter with him? No one knows — what can it be?” Coming across this incident in that old letter, who, I asked myself, shall say what was in the heart of this strange woman throughout those years with regard to me? As she had said of Julia, “Who shall explain her?”

In November I went on a delightful expedition to the Sologne to stay with a sister of H. B.’s whom I had met in Florence and seen once or twice since in Paris, whose husband kept a pack of hounds. The French describe our hunting as “*de l’équitation*,” and certainly the experiences I was about to partake in were, as Allen would have put it, quite a novelty. The hounds were bred larger than fox hounds and hunted roebuck and wild boar indiscriminately. We were generally out all day, pursuing the same animal perhaps for hours and hours, and not in the least averse to giving it a thorough rest while we ate the excellent luncheon that had been following us in a cart all morning. If you had a good run, so much the better, but the most exciting chase was unanimously considered a dismal failure unless you killed. The whole thing took place in forests with very occasional short-lived bursts in the open, and there was much galloping up and down rides, still more crawling and standing about in rides, no jumping to speak of, and interminable jogs home in the dark. This sounds deadly dull, and so it would be but for the fact that in France every hunting man or woman gradually becomes an expert, understands the whole game, is familiar with the habits of the animal they are chasing, and can detect, stooping from the saddle at a gallop, marks which I could not see even when down on all fours, staring with all my eyes. Further, these supernumerary huntsmen and women were able to tell from the footprint what the age of the animal was, the hour at which it had passed that way, whether it was the original quarry or not, what its exact state of mind was at the moment, and other details I have forgotten.

But what astonished me most was that totally unmusical people like my hostess had no difficulty whatever in distinguishing the many exquisite calls on the big curly French horns, carried by the master, the hunt servants, and one or two privileged members of the field. I used to make M. de Terrouenne blast these calls at me after dinner, to the horror of Marco, who didn't get on with the hounds and was not popular in a château with parquet floors like Villiers. But in spite of taking notes and studying them in bed with a view to tomorrow's hunt, I always mixed them up when the time came. Mr. Ewing had once told me that tone-deaf and exceptionally stupid soldiers were far better at learning the bugle calls than he himself, so I suppose my musical proclivities were against me.

Many people have said that to hunt down a wild boar seems a meritorious action at the time, so strong is the repulsion that animal inspires, and this I can endorse. On the other hand, though our pack didn't hunt deer, I rode with one that did, and shall never forget my distress at seeing a magnificent stag come blundering exhausted out of a thicket and fall headlong on to the road below, to be torn at by thirty couple of hounds. Never again, I said to myself as I turned hastily up a ride, would I risk witnessing such a spectacle. But presently someone came galloping after me; the "Hallali" was about to begin and I must come back at once. By that time they had put the stag out of his pain. He had struggled across the road, and lay, a noble and piteous sight, in the centre of a curiously regular circle of trees, on which the sparse leaves, nipped scarlet by frost, hung like drops of blood in the setting sun. While my forehead was being dabbled with real blood — I did not mind that part at all, it hurt neither me nor the stag — the field grouped round him, and then four individuals in green and gold, one of whom was the master, and another, perhaps unknown to himself, a very fine musician, gave us a specimen of music in one of its most moving and heavenly forms — horn calls in four parts. Let anyone ask for the gramophone records (not to be had in England perhaps) of Rossini's *Messe de S. Hubert* and judge if this sonority, which comes out well on the gramophone, can be surpassed for beauty. . . . When I went back to England it was with the secret feeling that, compared to this sort of thing, our hunting, however delightful, is sophisticated and artificial — in fact "*de l'équitation.*"

Of course my host and hostess were all-round sportsmen, and Kate Terrouenne, an excellent shot, went out regularly with her own dogs; but even if I were a good shot instead of a vile one, I think I should always hate shooting, especially waiting about in woods, and waking up out of a reverie to fire at the recollection of the animal you have just seen crossing the ride. In the Sologne I expended exactly 114 of poor M. de Terrouenne's cartridges and secured ten head of game, including an invisible woodcock, brought down at word of command in what seemed to me pitch-darkness.

One trivial incident connected with that visit — a trenchant criticism of the kind you never, never forget — I cannot refrain from mentioning. Wishing to do myself credit on the French scene, I had ordered a new habit, and during the last fitting, seated on the saddle, my eye on the mirror, expressed a fear that my shoulder blades stuck out rather. The artist's reply, uttered with great decision, was: "You have a magnificent back, madam; *I only wish you had a front to match.*"

While I was in France Nelly and Hugh came back from India, and that Christmas there was a forgathering at Frimhurst of the six daughters, the five sons-in-law, and the only son of the house. Hugh Eastwood being a typical John Bull in every fibre of his being, my loudly advertised appreciation of other countries would sometimes get on his nerves. He was then already a young father, and one day remarked that if, later on, any of my foreigners should wish to marry one of his daughters he would consider it a piece of d—d cheek. I enquired why on earth some charming French or German officer (I carefully kept to the army) should not aspire to the hand of an English girl, and Hugh answered, with a gentle smile: "Why not a gorilla?" . . .

At this stage of my story it seems superfluous to relate that after Christmas Charlie Hunter, whose brilliant business faculties were turning a poor man into a rich one, mounted me as usual, besides which Mary gave me many a day on her own horses. No brother-in-law was ever more generously disposed as regards his stables, or more unreservedly delighted if you put the powers of his animals to severe tests — which, after France, seemed emphatically the legitimate course to pursue in England. It is also needless to add that I

afterwards went on to beloved Muirhouse, but before speaking of that particular visit a certain subject must be touched on that connects with it in my mind.

Though my intercourse with Mrs. Benson and the Windsor Davidsons tended to a renewed interest in the Anglican position, my views on religion had remained as before. Concerning these, wild ideas had obtained in my little world at the time of my flight to Leipzig and after. One of poor Mr. Ewing's crimes had been introducing me to Max Müller's studies on the Eastern Religions, and owing to what was in reality a very slight acquaintance with Grecian philosophers I was credited with leanings towards many a mysterious form of paganism; for instance on one of my recent returns from the Continent a light-hearted cousin of mine, Lily Milles, had remarked between two games of tennis: "Now do sit down and tell me all about your religion; I believe it's awful and that you got it from Aristopheles."

As a matter of fact I simply disbelieved in God, greatly to the distress of dear old Mr. Davidson, with whom on this particular visit I used to walk about the woods discussing the subject almost daily. I remember his begging me nevertheless not to abandon prayer, and to begin thus: "O God, if there be a God," should that formula be acceptable to me — which it was. He also insisted on my going to hear the celebrated Presbyterian minister Dr. MacGregor, and we sat under him that Sunday morning in such a literal sense, our pew being right under the pulpit, that I left St. Giles with the stiffest of all the many stiff necks I have endured in my life, not having moved my head or taken my eyes off the preacher for an hour and a half. Being intensely refractory to sermons, and indeed to all things that involve sitting still for prolonged periods, this may give some idea of Dr. MacGregor's performance.

I wish I could describe his style as preacher — the rolling of the r's, the prolongation of certain vowels, the frequent use of long, sonorous words, the gesticulation, the incredible emphasis that never suggested ranting. One of his peculiarities was breaking away from what he had evidently set out to say, and branching off into something that had suddenly occurred to him. Ernest Davidson, Harry's younger brother, once told me about an impassioned outburst he had just had the good fortune to listen to: "Why don't

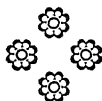
you read your *Bibles*?" Dr. MacGregor suddenly asked; "you read your Shakespeares, your Miltons, your Donnes, your Shelleys, your Tennysons — splendid poets all of them, God bless them! But why don't you read your *Bibles*? Isaiah, Jēremiah, Hēzekiah . . . gr-r-rand old poets, every one of them! . . . Listen to this!" (here a tremendous passage was read out) "and this . . . and this." And as he rolled forth one sonorous phrase after another, the leaves of the Bible before him were dashed over in such fashion that Ernest thought they would surely come fluttering down from the pulpit in fragments.

But his praying was, I thought, even more striking than his preaching — the wonderful lava-like outpouring, the simple, noble language to which his Scotch accent seemed to lend what in this case was not needed, an extra ring of sincerity. Not even an extensive acquaintance with the Bavarian peasant class quite cures one's tendency to confuse dialect with purity of heart. There is a dreadful man in London — accepted for his great wealth's sake by people who ought to know better — who drops into the quay-side low Scotch of his early days whenever he wishes to ingratiate himself with persons of social importance; I have heard him do it and seen his interlocutor unbend more than once. But Dr. MacGregor could no more have divested himself of his accent than of his limp, and as he was said to talk Spanish admirably I often wondered how that language fared in the struggle.

He was a curious-looking little man — misshapen, sallow, with the religious enthusiast's burning eyes — and in his company, too, I often walked the Muirhouse woods, discussing religion, moral effort, regeneration, and kindred themes. I remember one day when we had passed from serious topics to Spanish literature, his complaining bitterly of Anglo-Saxon mispronunciation of that fine name Don Quixote: "The way to pronounce it," he cried, "is Don Kee-hott-tay; now say it after me carefully, Don Kee-hott-tay" — and I obediently echoed him to the best of my ability. But he was not satisfied: "No, no, that's not it at all; try again — Don Kee-hott-tay . . . Don Kee-hott-tay," and we wandered along, crying "Don Kee-hott-tay" alternately, as if reciting some demented litany. Gradually his voice died away, and though he still murmured the magic syllables I saw his mind was elsewhere. "Ehm-hi," he

suddenly thundered, and thinking this was another Spanish word reconstructed for my benefit, though it sounded to me more like Hindustani, I repeated, also with great emphasis: "*Ehm-hi*"; whereupon Dr. MacGregor pulled up short, stared at me in astonishment, and said very earnestly: "I say to you, dear young lady, as I say to all poo-r-r sinners, and præeminently to myself, whatever ye do . . . *ehm-hi*" — and I perceived he had relapsed into the former conversation and unlike Mr. Alfred Scott Gatty was imploring me to aim high.

In later life, taken up enthusiastically by Queen Victoria, Dr. MacGregor lost some of his unsophisticatedness, I believe — the inevitable result of keeping high company; if so, I am glad I never saw him again.



CHAPTER XL. *Summer* 1889

THROUGHOUT all these years, from 1886 onwards, the mainstay of my life had been Mrs. Benson, and, needless to say, no one could have striven harder than she did against the long cold night of the spirit that fell upon me when all hope of a reconciliation with my friend had to be abandoned. In a book which turned out to be by a Benson under a pseudonym — *The Memoirs of Arthur Hamilton*, by Christopher Carr — I lit on a phrase that arrested me about its being "a pity to miss the chance of facing a hopeless situation," but I did not know how to do this. . . .

Meanwhile I had come to know the rest of the clan, meeting them occasionally in a fugitive manner at Lambeth, and more satisfactorily at Addington. Everyone knows what an unpermissibly gifted family they were. I say "were," thinking of the five who have since passed away, the last to go being the mother — that wonderful woman, whom to call "Ben," as her intimates did, seemed as fitting when she was over seventy as it did when first I knew her thirty-three years ago. Be the void she has left what it may, I am thankful that to the last, in spite of failing bodily strength, there was no other change. One could not have borne to see her slower

at the uptake, less deadily in repartee, less amused at the infinite comicalities of life.

It is a curious fact, and one that proves the richness of her equipment, that though she was one of the many ladies pronounced by Mr. Gladstone to be "the cleverest woman in England," her master passion was undoubtedly the cure of souls. A great part of her life was consecrated to her patients, as I used to call them, who when bereft of her physical presence were kept going by words of counsel and comfort written on letter paper so diminutive that it inevitably suggested a prescription. I really think the spiritual or moral dilemmas of Mrs. Jones the curate's wife interested her more than what Lord Salisbury said last night at dinner, and fancy the position she occupied, involving automatic and effortless contact with the most distinguished personalities of the day, gave her no great satisfaction. Speaking of her astonishing unworldliness, I once said as much to a very worldly old peeress, who thoughtfully answered: "Yes, poor thing, you see she has *no precedence*." I remember once walking with her through the huge dining-hall at Lambeth when the table was laid for some state banquet; appalled at the solemn spectacle, I asked whether champagne was served on such occasions, and this amazing hostess's reply was: "I haven't the faintest idea!"

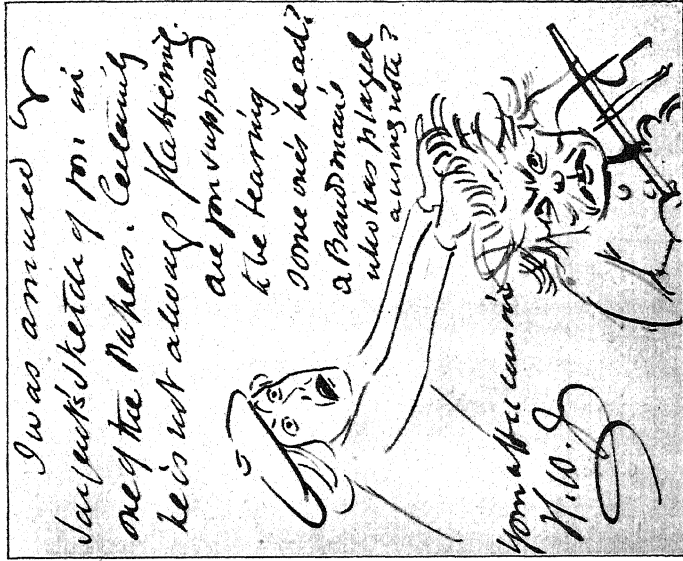
At a given moment of my life we differed violently on an essential point of conduct, and during some years met but seldom. But even then a link was her deep admiration for H. B.'s books, one of which, *Theories of Anarchy and of Law*, was answered by Maggie Benson in one of the reviews. But Mrs. Benson's favourite was the exquisite *Prison*, which she once told me accompanied her everywhere; it and the Bible — strange travelling companions!

One passage in her last letter to me (June 1918) is so characteristic that I may be forgiven for telling its story here. I had just come back from abroad and wrote asking if I might go to Tremans, her Sussex home, some time in July and endeavour to efface the recollection of our last meeting there a year previously. She was so game, such a gallant fighter, that one sometimes forgot she was no longer a vigorous woman in the prime of life, and on that occasion I had inveighed against the Church's attitude throughout our struggle for the vote with such violence that shame and remorse



[DRAWING BY JOHN S. SARGENT, R.A. (1901)]

The Author, Singing and Playing



The Rev. Hugo J.'s recollection of that Portrait

overcame me whenever I thought of it. (Remorse, that is to say, for the brutality of my controversial methods, in no wise for the views expressed.) Her reply was: "Now you speak of it I *do* remember a few stormy moments in the Shelter that day, but my dear, you never *were* given to understatement, were you?" Alas! that expiatory visit never took place, for before July came she was dead.

Among the boys the one I knew best was Fred, of whom I was always fond because he was such a dear at home, not to speak of his intense funniness and proficiency in games. Arthur Benson was already an Eton master and I seldom saw him at Lambeth, but we once had a spell of intimacy of a moral or intellectual order — I'm not sure which it was — charming while it lasted, but all too short. For various reasons I knew Maggie less than I could have wished, but her extraordinary intellectual power, though devoted mainly to subjects I was quite at sea in, such as political economy, philosophy, and other abstractions, could not escape the attention of even the most ignorant among her acquaintances. Meanwhile the way she dropped on any flaw in one's argument was convincing enough. There was a pure, aloof dignity of spirit about her which reminded one of Alpine peaks and all things majestic and not easily accessible, yet . . . there were distinctly passionate possibilities too. No storms are more terrible than those that rage in high altitudes, and I often wonder exactly what inner conflicts brought about the final clouding of that wonderful brain.

The one of the family who eventually became my particular friend was Nelly — take her all in all the most remarkable of the younger generation as personality, in my humble opinion; but as she died on what is merely the threshold of life for women of that calibre, one cannot be certain. Re-reading her letters, penned in easy profusion, the handwriting so identical with her mother's as to baffle one again and again on the envelope, I realize that in a wonderful collection of correspondence I have nothing to touch this particular blend of humour, profundity, and high spirits. There is the same fastidious literary quality as in Arthur Benson's writing, *plus* something indescribable that may be called genius for life. Nelly was the only close friend I ever had to whom games and adventure meant exactly what they do to me; a bond as great as our other link, a twin taste in humour.

Yet twins have dissimilarities! For instance I remember Mrs. Benson once saying it was inconceivable to her that anyone could be amused at a tipsy man, and Nelly added: "No decent being could be"; whereupon the confession had to be made that on occasion I had found tipsy people intensely funny.

Barring this limitation, which in all probability applies only to the female members of the party, to write the word "humour" is instantly to think of a Benson. I never met a family in whose existence that blessed element played a greater part, whose domestic wrangles made you long so intensely for a pocket gramophone recorder, especially if you have a bad memory for verbal felicities; in short one's prevailing state of mind in their company was: "What made you so awfully clever?" Hugh I knew less well than any of the others and instinctively liked him the least, mainly for the frivolous reason that when he was his father's chaplain he used to flit up and down the corridors of Lambeth in coats the skirts of which almost swept the floor — a common foible of short men. I never saw him after he became a Roman Catholic, but it was a relief to think of him safe in a cassock.

Of the Archbishop I stood in deadlier awe than of anyone I ever met in the whole course of my life. To begin with, there was the beauty I find so disconcerting in a man; then his office, which deeply impressed me; and lastly and chiefly the fact that like many hypersensitive people he was seldom quite at his ease — a state of things that in my youthful days utterly deprived me of my means, as the French say. Watching the progress of our duologues from her end of the table, with the particular look of devilment one knew so well on her face, Mrs. Benson would afterwards declare that the mouselike voice which replied to the Archbishop's remarks was a very beautiful thing to listen to. The sight of his majestic form approaching the tea-table scattered my wits as an advancing elephant might scatter a flock of sheep. I never did quite such stupid things with other people; nothing but sheer nervousness can have induced me, for instance, to contribute a certain anecdote one day at luncheon, for I could read the domestic storm signals and guessed that the Archbishop was not at his most serene that day.

After a few bad moments the conversation had turned to printers' errors — as well it might in a family six out of the seven members

of which were authors — and I had got as far as saying I had recently read about a printer's error, merely the omission of a final "d," that really was — and here I stopped, overcome with misgiving. But there was no disobeying His Grace's acid-affable: "Pray let us hear the case in question," and with death in my soul I told them how a local newspaper had stated in connection with a recent visit from General Booth, that after his train had left the station a large crowd remained on the platform for half an hour singing *Rock of Ages*.

Whether at another moment, or given another narrator than myself, His Grace would have been amused, and let this very innocent specimen of joking on sacred subjects pass, I do not know; what happened then was, first silence all round, then someone tried to laugh, then Mrs. Benson said cheerfully: "A fine athletic performance anyhow!" and instantly asked the Archbishop whether the Dean of Rochester had spoken well at the meeting that morning. . . . "But it really *was* a funny story," I afterwards pleaded to Nelly, who had not been present. "Funny!" she replied gloomily, "of course it was funny, but what on earth has that to do with it?" . . . What indeed!

But the worst was to catch oneself raking up scraps of antiquated schoolboy slang in one's disorder — expressions I had neither used nor heard since the Sidcup days. I remember one occasion, someone having diabolically repeated a foolish remark of mine about Handel's music reminding me of a mothers' meeting, when the Archbishop, who of course adored our great English composer, demanded with some dignity to hear my reasons for such a statement. After listening in silence till a halting explanation had died away on his interlocutor's lips, he remarked: "Are you aware that you have used the words 'that sort of thing' seven times running?" He must have loved Handel even more than I knew. Eventually, for a very brief moment only, we became quite good friends, the basis being stately semi-jocular indulgence on his side and terrified gratification on mine; but of this interlude I will speak later when the time comes.

Apart from the fact that, as Mrs. Benson once put it: "We all realize that you and the Head of the Church are *not* two dewdrops destined to roll into one," my relations with the Benson family,

though enthralling — to me, at least — were rather tempestuous, most of us being more or less aggressive and cocksure. The word used for our frequent collisions was “jars,” and out of it sprang the only riddle I ever made — one of which I am still proud: “When is a jar not a jar? — When it’s *adore*” (by which I hoped to convey that though I fought with them I loved them dearly). To my mind the women of that family had not an ounce of artistic blood between them, and though I delighted in the reason Maggie gave for not going to hear the *Passion*: “I don’t like Bach because he is so very ugly,” this difference of breed was no doubt the main source of the jars. People who only admit one view of moral law — that of the Church — can hardly mix at bottom with those who see life through an artist’s eyes; not at least unless artistic kinship is there to bridge the gulf between them. When first I knew the Bensons — the time at which I was closest to them — the artist was in abeyance, and though I was not a believer our outlook was more or less the same; but even then the dissimilarity of grain made itself felt. Sometimes I am glad Nelly died before I left their road and took my own; we could never have become alienated, but there would have been bad moments, and we should both have been very unhappy.

My friendship with her — the only one of his adoring children, by the by, who was completely at ease with the Archbishop — sprang up, strange to say, on the cricket field. During the summer of 1889 the cricket mania possessed all the young women of my acquaintance, the fountainhead of inspiration being the celebrated White Heather Club, of which Talbots, Lytteltons, and Brasseys were the moving spirits. This club was the Zingaree of women’s cricket and sported the prettiest colours I ever saw, a yellow, white, green, and black ribbon with a faint line of pink in it. In the light of her subsequent career, and also apart from any such considerations, I am proud to say that my particular friend was Meriel Talbot, a cricketer compared with whom most of us were impostors. We all quite realized the fact, our feelings towards her being akin to those of schoolboys for W. G. Grace; and however that great man may have treated neophytes and other inferiors, I can only say that Meriel met our incompetence with the gracious indulgence

of a true artist. In one respect only, rapidity of movement, were some of us her superiors, but as she made most of the runs for her side, she had every right to make them at her own pace — a curiously majestic one. The Club spread its net wide; thus it came that people like my sisters, myself, and Nelly Benson had the honour of being members, and have played cricket under the very eyes of demigods such as Edward and Alfred Lyttelton and Jack Talbot.

Fortunately people who love games are almost sure to possess qualities which redeem other deficiencies, for it is not always easy to beat up eleven wholly sympathetic young women. The White Heather of course could afford to pick and choose; not so certain smaller clubs we played against, whose members were sometimes more competent than socially satisfactory. Once there was a celebrated match at Falconhurst, on which occasion Meriel's father, Mr. J. Talbot, gave a sumptuous luncheon to both elevens in a marquee, and the visiting team, whose behaviour had been rather rowdy all morning, now began hacking strands off the beautiful ferns that stood along the centre of the narrow tables, the idea being to gain easier access to the lobster salad. At this point Meriel rose in her place, and no one who had the privilege of hearing her utter the words: "Leave those ferns alone, please!" could question her fitness for the posts of command she has since occupied.

Another time a match actually took place at Lambeth, the Talbots bringing a team against one raised by Nelly, for whom I played on that occasion. We thought the other XI were going to have a walk-over, and in spite of their civil efforts to disguise the fact, such was evidently their own expectation, but strange to say we beat them by three wickets. Mr. Talbot, who was attending the Diocesan Conference in the library, came out to watch the match, which was pretty well, I thought; but the surprise of the day, to me at least, was the Archbishop's almost boyish delight in our victory. It was just these human rays, shooting out unexpectedly from behind clouds of awfulness, that made him such a nerve-shaking acquaintance.

When golf arrived in England, the cricket mania, which involved a certain amount of restlessness, was superseded as far as I was concerned, but it was a very jolly mania while it lasted.

All this time, though I had been working steadily at orchestral composition as Tchaikovsky had advised, it was becoming more and more clear to me that unless my musician's soul was to be lost I must go back to Germany; back to a country, to mention one point only, where friendly conductors give one a free run-through of one's first orchestral attempts — a thing impossible, of course, in mercenary England. But apart from this I now knew, after giving it a long patient trial, that to live an artist's life at Frimhurst was an impossibility. All brain-workers need peace and quiet, but I am certain the musician's temperament is more easily rasped than any other, perhaps because musical creation involves no soothing contact with outside realities. The painter, the sculptor, depend upon the exterior world; the poet's material, words, is the medium of ordinary intercourse; alone among artists is the composer bereft of this greatest element of sanity, concerned as he is with exteriorizing a world that only exists within. Thus the constant presence of a violent spirit, uncontrolled and uncontrollable, such as my mother's, was devastating; all the more so because, loving her, I was harrowed by the spectacle of her moral suffering and maddened by constant scenes in which my violence equalled hers and was the subject of bitter remorse afterwards.

Throughout the autumn of 1888 right on to the summer of 1889 I think she was going through some slow, painful moral crisis — perhaps the final realization that in spite of the youthfulness of her heart she was an old woman; for in January 1889 she had drawn up an informal Will, dividing her lace and jewelry among her children. She shut herself up a great deal in her own room, had a strange aloofness of manner, and when I was staying away, there was little or no correspondence between us — all of which was even more distressing than actual scenes. And thus it came that the decision to pass the following winter abroad had to be taken, though now more than ever the thought of her loneliness in that empty house weighed tons on my heart. Bob, who for many years, thanks to the never-failing kindness of the Duke of Connaught, had been on H.R.H.'s Rifle Brigade list, had just been up for another examination — his last chance but one — and if he passed might possibly be posted to a battalion on foreign service. My father, whose great idea was, as I have said, to bundle the young ones out of the nest

without delay, and who considered it "right and proper" to disregard maternal feelings in such cases, was strongly in favour of this course; but the prospect hung like a Damocles sword over my mother's head.

On the other hand Nina Hollings, a very favourite daughter, was only three and a half miles off, and the Hollings babies, who were coming along, could be counted on as a great source of interest. Then too there would be visits from the elder batch of grandchildren; but though Mother adored and was quite delightful with children, these visits involved collisions with nurses (who resented criticism of their methods) and other not enjoyable incidents. On the whole, therefore, the outlook was not very satisfactory; but Mother, whose unerring instinct told her I ought to go back to the musical world, said not a word to make it harder for me — on the contrary protested that she would be perfectly happy, that Bob wasn't off yet awhile, that Alice would come and stay in the spring after he was gone, and so on. As I am never tired of saying, at the worst moments her bigness of soul came into play — then she never failed us.

But lest I become sentimental over her and end by feebly and foolishly relapsing into the chocolate-box style of portraiture, I must just add that one day, when Papa was signing some legal document about which there had evidently been a dispute, Mother went up to him and, saying in a would-be jocular manner: "So a wife's signature counts for nothing, does it?" smote him, as she intended lightly, on his bald head. But as she was furious at the time, and her hand covered with rings, I wonder he took such a painful joke so good-humouredly. The document was connected with selling out stock, for Bob's training and crammers' fees had to be paid for somehow; at long last, too, the decision was taken to let the kitchen garden, fields, and farmhouse. But though my mother pursued this end for a while with some energy, I am bound to confess that — the idea never materialized!

Meanwhile I and a large contingent of the family were bent on the Paris Exhibition. My intention was to proceed thence to Munich (where Levi would certainly contrive to let me hear my orchestral pieces and where I should see the Fiedlers, whom I had

not met for two years) and after that go on to Vienna, which Tchaikovsky had described as the musician's Paradise. We started *en masse* for Paris in September, all of us at the last stage of penury except Herbert Hollings, who, never addicted to extravagance, and much put to it to keep Nina's quite opposite tendency within bounds, was firmly decided to cut their cloak according to our cloth. And throughout that expedition another familiar appeal to his wife: "I do hope you will do nothing to make yourself conspicuous," was launched on every possible occasion with the usual stimulating result.

We installed ourselves in one of those hideous plaster buildings, shaped like elongated cubes set on end, that kept springing up overnight all round the Exhibition enclosure for the benefit of *les étrangers*, and found ourselves amidst a floridly dressed crowd who criticized the food at the top of their voices all through dinner. As Bob remarked, it was strange that people who behung their bare necks with the chains of the chandeliers should have such a fastidious taste in cooking. Marco, one of our party of course, was the great problem. He disliked and was unaccustomed to being left alone, and on the other hand could not possibly accompany us to the Exhibition, so had to be locked up in my room. Returning at night we found the floor littered with plaster; true to the traditions of prisoners, he had endeavoured to scrape a hole through the wall into the next room and very nearly succeeded. We swept up the mess into a newspaper, stowed it away in my trunk, and masked the excavations with a heavy chest of drawers.

During our short stay in Paris every bit of furniture in that room was gradually shifted for the same reason; but as the authorities said not a word, we hoped that what with guests continually arriving and departing, and the prevailing famine in chambermaids (our own had been generously tipped to start with), the matter had escaped notice. Vain hope; while accounts were being settled, a long bill headed "*Dégâts causés par le chien*" was suddenly handed to me by the tight-lipped proprietress, who thereupon folded her arms and stared into vacancy. I said I would consent to meet her half-way, and in the course of a heated altercation I remember one ladi-pary phrase of hers: "*Ce n'est pas votre adresse, madame, que nous voulons — c'est votre argent.*" But troops of fresh clients were

pouring in, and whether from hurry or boredom the compromise was accepted.

One feature of that Exhibition specially remains with me, the native band that played at the Roumanian restaurant. At that time the stream of gipsy improvisation that so often inspired Brahms had not been muddled by industrial exploitation, and I then realized with stupefaction the musical genius of these peoples of the Near East, the infiltration of which accounts for the matchless quality of Viennese orchestras. Every day we either lunched or dined *chez les Roumains*, and became, perhaps not wholly owing to our artistic support, tremendous favourites with the performers, who thoroughly mastered our individual peculiarities and referred to Herbert — the type of man who always wants to get on to the next item on the pleasure-list — as “*ce monsieur qui est toujours si pressé*.”

Finally, at the end of all things, came one of those poignant little incidents that throw a chance light on an immemorial situation. While we were all shaking hands effusively with the band and endeavouring to express our sentiments with a sincerity which I hope drove a way for itself through the strange French of some of our party, a little Roumanian girl — she may have been sixteen perhaps — with black eyes and golden hair, drew Violet apart and shyly asked her whether she perhaps knew Monsieur Henderson of London? Violet said she knew two or three Monsieur Hendersons; what were this one's initials and address? But on these points the child could give no information, merely saying it was the Monsieur Henderson who had visited the Exhibition last month and would she give him this letter? — after which she flew back to her comrades. Of course it was hopeless to look for this needle in the bundle of London hay, and Violet says she destroyed the note unread, which, given the excellence of her memory, is a statement one must accept. As a matter of fact I am sure it is true, and in 1889 I should have done the same; but nowadays I think I should open it, telling myself there might be a clue inside. “Thus we go up, up, up; and thus we go down, down, down. . . .”

CHAPTER XLI. *Autumn and Winter* 1889

I SAID good-bye to the dear family and turned my face Munich-wards with a feeling I had never known before, dread of the future. As a rule any new departure rouses a spirit of adventure; but it is not easy to make a fresh start when your heart is aching, your health indifferent, and your conscience ill at ease — for the thought of my mother gave me no rest. Moreover the prospect of meeting the Fiedlers was agitating. As I said, a certain revival of correspondence between Mary and me had taken place, but since I believed that her once keen realization of my wrongs was blurred, there had been no reopening of that question between us — a question of which my intimate friends had heard more than enough! To pass through Munich without making a sign would have been unnatural and churlish, but I rather wondered whether the news of my coming would give her unqualified satisfaction.

On the contrary her reply, written in the old warm-hearted vein, informed me that this meeting had long been ardently desired by her. I further gathered that during the Herzogenbergs' long sojourn at Munich in the winter of '87-'88 yet another revulsion of feeling had set in. Closer acquaintance with Lisl, further reflections on her action towards me, had dimmed the charm — in short, Lisl was dethroned. I am certain that sympathy with my hard case had a great deal to do with it, but I also knew that Mary, always an ardent Wagnerite, had meanwhile fallen under a stronger sway than Lisl's, having in spite of Conrad's aloofness from Wagnerism become an intimate of Wahnfried. In various little digs at the Herzogenbergs and the limitation of their outlook in both Art and Life, in remarks about coteries of manacled spirits congratulating each other on the purity of their little ideals, and carefully keeping out every breath of fresh air, I at once recognized the voice of Cosima.

This wonderful woman was far too clever, far too much a woman of the world, not to appreciate the decorative value of an occasional and carefully selected heretic in her inner circle; hence she had no objection to a man of distinction, such as Conrad Fiedler, declining to fall flat on his face before "Our Art," or even questioning, as he did, its fundamental principles. Besides which Con-

rad was wealthy — in her eyes a supreme merit. Similar heterodox views on the part of Hildebrand, a still more famous man, were put up with for analogous reasons, and meanwhile both men did ardent homage — as well they might — to her genius. But what she could not tolerate was that eminent personalities in the musical world such as the Herzogenbergs should recognize Wagner as one recognizes Anarchy or any other destructive force, the while worshipping Brahms as the true god. In after years two staunch satellites of Cosima's told me she was never more magnificent than when denouncing the Herzogenberg crew; thus I was rather surprised, when I met her for the first time in my life at Berlin, to learn from her own lips that the premature death of Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, one of the glories and graces of Germany, had caused her heart to bleed. Suddenly I recollected that our hostess, who was standing close by and had adored Lisl, was a power — in fact, one of the greatest ladies in the German Empire! Whatever her faults may have been, Cosima did nothing by halves.

To return to my journey; it was not, therefore, a fear of finding my wrongs still obscured by the glamour of Lisl that agitated me as the train banged along southwards, but the knowledge that while I had been at the Exhibition the Fiedlers and the Herzogenbergs had been meeting in the mountains. I longed to how how Herzogenberg really was, if his illness had told upon her physically — overstrained her heart, or even dimmed the brightness of her hair (a frequent result of prolonged anxiety). For some people the outside shell counts a great deal; I think I would rather become deaf to my friends' voices than blind to their faces, their gestures, and the little physical ways that exteriorize personality. Lisl, for instance, had a very characteristic way of holding her head a little on one side and nodding gently as she spoke. . . . All down these later years nothing had given me more pain than the way some flowers nod . . . or again, sometimes walking along a road in the dusk, my mind on music and all else forgotten, a tree-top would suddenly bend towards me with the old familiar gesture and wring my heart as if put there on purpose to do it. . . .

I remember that on that journey the words of a recently published poem were running in my head — not very grand poetry per-

haps, but the cry of a man sorrowing over a broken friendship. I can repeat one verse even now:

*I had but to utter his name, and my youth
Rose up in my soul, and my blood grew warm,
And I hardly remembered the broken troth,
And I wholly remembered the ancient charm.*

But this gentle mood was doomed to find scant nourishment at Munich, Mary's sentiments for Lisl having passed from indifference to something very like contempt — and that for a reason which amused me, though it was a legitimate one.

There is one manifestation of German *Gemüth*¹ which I have always detested. If two husbands are friends and call each other "*du*," the same relation subsisting between the two wives, there may always come a moment — generally after supper — when someone suggests a general stir-about, and everyone begins calling everyone else "*du*." . . . You may regret it next morning, but there it is, a fact not to be gone back upon. I always classed people by their behaviour on this point. For instance the Fiedlers were life-long friends of the X's, the couple that turned the scale against me at the critical moment, but there was no indulgence in this unpleasant promiscuity; on the other hand, as it appeared, a great alliance had now sprung up between the X's and the Herzogenbergs, resulting in *du* all round! If the Fiedlers were rather disgusted, I was both disgusted and bewildered, for no one had loathed and inveighed against this abuse more than Lisl. I also learned, with bitter rejoicing, that, the X husband being the interesting one of the two, Frau X had soon fallen away from her first enthusiasm and now maintained that Lisl was "*die raffinirteste Egoist in der Welt*" (the most subtle egoist in the world)! . . .

But what made the deepest impression on me was that Conrad, who unlike his wife was inspired by the kindest feelings towards my former friend, told me that in his opinion the real trouble was — lack of depth of feeling. He hastened to add that Lisl had said how greatly she envied their being free to see me, whereupon Mary ejaculated: "That was said to save her face!" and in answer to Conrad's remonstrances she added: "*thou thinkest it. I say it!*" (It is

¹ Untranslatable; between "feeling" and "sentimentality."

only fair to add that a couple of years later, when Lisl, evidently a dying woman, stayed with the Fiedlers on a journey south from which she never returned, she completely recaptured Mary's sympathy — a fact for which, when the time came, I was deeply thankful.)

And now I began definitely to hate Lisl. I felt, perhaps with some justification, that during these last years some subtle deterioration of character had been going on, reflected fiercely that such is the fate of all traitors, and — was more miserable than at any other period of my life.

All this while, indeed throughout our short-lived friendship, from August 1889 till her death in November 1890, I was in constant enchanting correspondence with Nelly Benson, and it is curious to see how she too, like Lili Wach, and later H. B., combated the idea of a callous, light-hearted Lisl, on the ground that it would not rhyme with those seven past years. "Does the nature of the case," she writes, "quite forbid you to believe that envy of the Fiedlers for being free to meet you is in her mind — kept down, suppressed, anything you like, but there? Of course the compelling force of circumstances upon her has been awful, but how could things have changed like this? How can one believe she has not suffered?" . . . But as in the other cases this plea left me unmoved — the time had not come yet.

I have often noticed that when Fate has a phenomenal run of ill luck in store for you, she begins by dropping a rare piece of good fortune into your lap, thereby enhancing the artistic effect of the sequel. Later events will show the bearing of this remark on the fact that when my short visit to the Fiedlers was over I instantly lit upon charming lodgings — a great point just then, for a spell of hard and hurried work was before me. That summer I had made friends with Manns, the conductor of the celebrated Crystal Palace concerts, and after seeing a String Quartet of mine he had held out hopes of producing one of my orchestral pieces in the spring of 1890, provided I could let him have the score and parts by January 1. Now, I had never yet written for orchestra, and foresaw that after hearing my work there would be various improvements to be

made — and what that involves only composers know! Unfortunately the hearing could not take place yet awhile, for a sort of minor Wagner Festival was coming on, and given the endless rehearsals Levi insisted on, I knew that the sight of a new MS. on their desks, to be run through by favour, would be more than even his orchestra could bear. So I just let him know I had arrived and why, begged him now and again to give me a free pass to the Opera, and proceeded to make my first real acquaintance with Munich.

Because of what was to befall me there, for many years I shrank from the very thought of Munich; scene, as occurs to me while I am writing, of the bitterest disappointment of my life twenty-six years later — the ideal production of *The Wreckers* annulled by the war! . . . At first the place put a spell upon me; I even appreciated the strivings after the architecture on the far side of the Alps which some people find so ridiculous. But the chief fascination lay in the Alps themselves — on certain days apparently not more than ten miles off (really forty) — and the fiercely rushing green Isar, which brings you still closer to the glaciers for which the heart of mountain-climber ever yearns. Marco hurled himself daily into that icy river after sticks he seldom succeeded in timing properly, so violent is the current; realizing this, he took to rushing on ahead and plunging in long before I reached the bank, to be swept backwards down stream, his eyes passionately fixed on my right arm. Oh, he was a gallant dog! . . . Another sympathetic feature was that town and country seemed far more intermixed than elsewhere; peasants came to market in costume, and not having yet learned that the Bavarians are the least reliable race in the world, I was captivated by what seemed to me their simplicity and bluff good humour. Here too one at last found traces of religion on a German scene. Even in the town the churches were thronged by men as well as women, and in the rural districts there was a certain fantastic element that Roman Catholicism seems to bring with it, which redeems village life from the unutterable flatness of Lutheran and freethinking communities in North Germany. Finally, to crown all, Munich owned a town witch, or had till four months ago, when owing to irregularities in money matters she had been banished to an outlying village. But her enormous *clientèle*, many of them people of high rank, remained faithful, and were in

the habit of going out quite openly by train to have their horoscopes cast.

During that winter I had many interesting discussions with Conrad Fiedler, who was a really deep and independent thinker, and recall one about the total absence of religious feeling among the cultivated in his country. Figures like Mr. Gladstone, Lord Acton, and other men on the first line intellectually, yet believers, are quite unthinkable in Germany, for which reason it came natural to all to suspect poor Wach of insincerity. Mediatized princes, whether intellectual or the reverse, were ostentatiously devout, but as this was part of the *durchlauchtige* make-up, it was discounted. I remember that Reuss, in spite of his respect and affection for the Herzogenbergs, once read them a little lecture for referring unbecomingly to the Athanasian Creed before the servant. They accepted the reproof meekly, considering themselves guilty of a breach of manners, but nothing would have persuaded them that an intelligent fellow like Reuss could really take religion seriously. This contemptuous attitude towards belief induced, so I argued to Conrad, a dryness of spirit in which I saw no proof of superiority, and I remember his replying: "Perhaps you are right, yet I confess that to us it seems impossible to look upon religion as anything but the fad of lunatics and women."

In support of his thesis he told me a wonderful anecdote about dear Johanna Röntgen, Line, and Line's fiancé, who had passed through Munich that spring on their way from Italy — the girls still under the influence of an afterwards celebrated Lutheran pastor with beautiful eyes, whose coming to Leipzig I had assisted at and whom I considered a *poseur*. It appeared that our friends had gone to St. Peter's on Easter Sunday, and while the congregation, to quote Johanna, was revelling in pagan orgies below, the three Protestants scaled the Dome and, standing in the outside gallery clasping hands, sang Lutheran chorales at the pitch of their voices to the roofs below. They related this achievement with triumph to the Fiedlers and were more surprised than offended at the result, the fiancé asking wonderingly: "But what is there to *laugh* at?"

Though he was the soul of honour, politeness, and refinement, Conrad's spirit of detachment tried me a little at times. Even at my present age I find it difficult to really enjoy intercourse with

people whose characters I disapprove of, and Mary, the most instinctive of beings, was of my way of feeling; but Conrad would tell her that Lisl's character was not her business, that you can't blame people for acting according to their nature, and so on. This fair-mindedness and caution, accentuated in his case by lack of temperament, are very Saxon traits. By degrees I picked up details concerning his championship of me against my traducers; how he told Lisl it was her duty to contradict the reports her mother was spreading; how Lisl had protested: "But I can't proclaim my mother a liar"; how he had replied: "But if she is, you must," and almost broke with her about it.

At the same time he was still in transports of admiration at Frau von Stockhausen's elemental nature; "Why," he said to me, "if she could, she would torture you physically, and not able to do that, she tortures you otherwise"; and when I pointed out that the real reason of this fanatical hatred was not, as might be supposed, the ills I had brought on them, but jealousy about Lisl, he declared this to be a fine and typical example of maternal instinct. Much as he regretted her lack of other qualities, nobly as he had thrown himself into the breach, he nevertheless applauded this ravaging mother from the stalls.

I went to see one or two of the mad King's castles, also the lake where, frantically struggling, locked in each other's arms, he and his doctor went over the edge; and there I remembered that a delightful old man (I was passing through Munich when the tragedy happened) had remarked: "*Nur eins freut mich, dass endlich einmal der Arzt vom Patienten umgebracht wird*" (Anyhow I'm glad that for once the patient has killed the doctor). Fiedler had a curious collection of prints showing the King's activities as architect and upholsterer, among them villas and interiors designed and provided by him for Wagner's mistresses. That great man's muse was notoriously dependent on *le décor*, and the King was determined stimulus should not be lacking during his sojourns in these places. Can sympathetic patronage go farther?

Early in November I made my first acquaintance with Bavarian slipperiness, my landlady suddenly informing me that the owner of the house — the omnipotent *Hausherr* — had threatened to give her notice unless she turned me out immediately, the flat hav-

ing been let on the express understanding that there were to be no female lodgers. Learning however that my rent had been prepaid up to December 1, he had graciously consented to tolerate my presence till that date. I wondered if the *Hausherr* was a woman-hater, a lunatic, or what, but there was no time to take further action just then, for a note arrived from Levi bidding me present myself with my scores next day: namely a *Serenade* in four movements, and an *Overture to Anthony and Cleopatra*.

The result was eminently satisfactory — according to Levi — but I saw that many details could be improved and that to get these done by December 1 would take me all my time, so the search for other quarters had to stand over for the present. . . . And now came further acquaintance with Bavarian reliability; copyist after copyist accepted the job, and two days later, being mysteriously stricken with illness, found himself unable to go on with it — each man writing an endless letter to explain how painful it was to his own feelings to break faith with me. Eventually I had to do nearly the whole thing myself, for a fortnight working twelve or thirteen hours a day, eating horrible food, and taking next to no exercise.

Meanwhile disquieting news arrived from home. Bob had just scraped through his examination, being last on the list of successful candidates — a far more promising situation than being first, for evidently you must be a favourite with Fortune to have got in at all. But this meant qualification for the cavalry only, and as another time he might fail altogether, it was decided to put him into the 21st Lancers (then Hussars) — a regiment reputed to be quiet (!) and stationed — alas! poor Mother — in India. Indian pay is double pay; nevertheless an allowance that in those days would have done well enough in the Rifle Brigade would certainly not be sufficient for a cavalry officer, and I gathered that for the first time our optimistic father was seriously troubled by the financial situation of the Smyth Family Robinson. And here was I, draining the estate of one hundred and twenty pounds a year! . . .

I think I have not yet said how generously and uncomplainingly this allowance was bestowed, for by now even my father believed in me, and my “success” was the dearest wish of my mother’s heart. As a matter of fact enough could have been saved in six months at

Frimhurst to keep me in affluence for a year in Germany, but the point was that living at home I should cost them relatively nothing. Nelly Benson argued that I ought to look upon myself as an inevitable burden, much as if I were a cripple, and accept the position philosophically; which perhaps might have been achieved had I not been feeling so extraordinarily ill and unlike myself — above all haunted perpetually with visions of Mother bereft of every single child. . . . I mentally decided that when the time came for quitting my present lodgings I would live in one room only and reduce my allowance by a sixth.

In spite of work I managed to go to the Opera occasionally. When it was too late to claim the opulent seats Levi placed at my disposal I used to sit, or more often stand, in the gods, and as there was little time for correspondence at home I once began a letter to Nelly up there, standing and holding the writing-block in mid-air. Presently a nice ugly young man who was sitting just below me turned round and said: "May I offer you my back as desk?" and bent forward to put himself into position. In common gratitude the letter had to be a short one, but remembering this sympathetically German incident, which caused no sensation whatever in the gods, I see that life at Munich was not without poetic charm.

On another night I had a stall for a *Lohengrin* performance, and, looking round the house, to my surprise caught sight of some English faces I knew in the dress circle — Lady Trevelyan and two of her daughters, friends of Mary Hunter's whose acquaintance I had made in London during the summer.

The Trevelyans were inexplicable people, as absolutely musical, and, what is more, as completely at my own standpoint in matters of art, as any of my friends abroad. And though Lady Trevelyan was Irish, one cannot say that explains everything, for Sir Alfred was of course English, but as unlike the ordinary Englishman in his views and tastes as the rest of the family, and incidentally one of the most original and delightful of personalities. The girls had studied music in Germany and like their mother not only felt, but knew and judged. Absolutely unworldly, not caring two straws about society, they thought for themselves and belonged to no set in particular, which is perhaps the only receipt for keeping a really fresh

mind. Though it is impossible to think of Trevelyans being standardized, it may have helped matters that they were Catholics, devout Catholics, but of the Old English type — in fact I think Sir Alfred was a bit of a Gallican — consequently the main idea of the Manning school, the conversion of Anglicans, played no part in their scheme. This much it had been possible to glean in the one or two meetings achieved in London; also that Pauline, the eldest girl (there were no sons), was probably the most musical of the party, anyhow the chief executant. But little did I dream that when all else had failed, when, with the cheapening of what had been my great treasure, life seemed almost worthless, a miracle would be wrought by what one calls chance . . . and that the agent, humanly speaking, was to be Pauline.

At that moment only Lady Trevelyan and two of the other girls were in Munich, Sir Alfred and Pauline turning up for the *Ring* later on. Although the strange dread of the future never left me, their presence made all the difference for the time being, and we revelled in music together, especially in a wonderful performance of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. Probably because of my then state of mind it seemed to me I had never heard it before; the terror of a certain veiled, rushing passage for violas and cellos at the thought of sin, death, and judgment . . . the wild triumph of the trumpet call flaming out of it . . . how it haunted me in the hours to come! . . .

The morning after the performance I went to see Levi when he was at breakfast, and remember how he rushed to the piano with a piece of black bread and butter in one hand, saying, as he strummed bits of the Mass with the other: “. . . and this passage for instance . . . was there ever anything like it?” And presently the bread and butter was cast aside, and this overworked man, full of cares (as he was just then) and on the brink of a severe illness (as he turned out to be), instead of finishing his breakfast, began to play with the fiery enthusiasm of a boy. I told the Trevelyans about it, and we felt we were well met in this land. But I must not forget to record how one illusion of ours, that the English are less hated in Bavaria than in North Germany, was dispelled by Beatrice Trevelyan overhearing one street boy address another in furious *crescendo* as “*Du Kameel . . . du ZULU . . . du ENGLÄNDER!*”

I have always preferred rehearsals to performances, and though to attend a rehearsal in the Opera House was *strengstens verboten*, Levi — a Jew, not a Prussian — gave us a card of admission to a certain box over the orchestra for the rehearsal of *Le Roi l'a dit*, which he was just then producing. The box-opener, prepared for our incursion, at first took exception to Marco, but I guaranteed his good behaviour, and as if to inspire confidence he at once settled down to sleep. The auditorium was of course dark, and at one moment, when hell was let loose in the orchestra, I could not resist inviting him to put his forepaws on the ledge of the box and look over, just for a treat. The terrific and instantly strangled bark that followed was lost in the din, and we afterwards gathered that no one had noticed anything unusual.

My work was finished with a day in hand, and the parcel despatched to Manns on November 29. I then put my heavy luggage in charge of her who was no longer my landlady — expressing an ironical hope that to this, at least, the *Hausherr* would raise no objection — and went off to join the Trevelyans at Wörishofen, a village in the Bavarian Alps whither they had been lured by a Hungarian friend, Count Chorinsky, to try the celebrated Kneipp Cure. Since then this system has been imitated throughout Germany, but I cannot think that what we saw and took part in at Wörishofen can have been faithfully reproduced elsewhere; nothing but the magnetic personality of *Pfarrer* Kneipp could persuade flesh and blood to embark on such adventures.

To begin with the setting, it was more primitive even than another Bavarian *Kur-Ort* I have described in these pages (Aibling) and so tiny that it might have been one of the toy villages fabricated by Johanna's schoolchildren but for the lifelike heaps of manure under the windows. This spectacle, and the amazing filthiness of the inhabitants, suggested that microbes played no part in Kneipp's theory of disease — which rather agitated some of us. But once you had interviewed the man himself, there was a truce to vain questionings; you believed and accepted without reserve.

He was then seventy, though he looked fifteen years younger — a strong, grave-looking peasant-priest, encompassed cloudlike with the authority and human kindness of people who understand suffering

and know how to deal with it. Having discovered while still a young man that physical healing was his second vocation, he asked permission of his Bishop, much to the horror of brother-priests, to study medicine. Now, if a Minor Canon of Canterbury Cathedral were similarly inspired, if the whole scandalized Close rose against him, not to speak of envenomed medical opposition, I imagine even the Archbishop himself would be powerless to affect the situation. But things are otherwise ordained in Catholic countries; Kneipp's Bishop not only broke down all opposition, but later on, when the system became famous, got him permission to hound away would-be hotel speculators, on the principle that none but his own peasants ought to profit by visitors' money. As for what the accommodation thus provided amounted to, I again refer to my remarks on Aibling.

At first, but for his strong wonderful old face and the virtue that went out of him, you might have fancied the *Pfarrer* was a charlatan, for when you began to describe your symptoms he waved his hand and said: "I know . . . I know," hardly honouring you with a glance, and proceeded to give rapid directions to his stalwart niece, Fräulein Marie, who looked after the female patients. But when Pauline presented herself he instantly put his finger on a certain spot and asked: "How long have you had constant pain here?" (At that time I never knew she had pain anywhere, nor did anyone except her family.) Kneipp's gifts, including this lightning diagnosis, had by now gained him a solid reputation; we knew that great doctors sent him hopeless cases — doomed and gangrenous limbs for instance (a speciality of those parts); also that he cured even cancer if taken before operation. Nevertheless this incident with Pauline was an eye-opener.

The *établissement* consisted of a few rough sheds, for men and women respectively, into which the patients were herded four at a time, and, having once been shown what to do, treated one another. Each stripped in turn, went down on all fours in a flat tub, and cold water was poured out of a can over a given section of the body. These pourings, called *Anwendungen* (applications), were varied every three days and in our case Fräulein Marie did the libations, but Sir Alfred and Chorinsky officiated for each other. You then got, dripping wet, into your clothes, the thermometer being well below zero, and walk about briskly for a quarter of an hour, by which time

your clothes were dry and you yourself in a wonderful glow. Incidentally the Trevelyans believed they must have been the *Pfarrer's* first English patients, for when Madeleine mentioned that they all tubbed daily he exclaimed in astonishment: "*täglich dieselbe Anwendung? — das versteh' ich nicht*" (the same application day after day? — *that* I cannot understand).

There were other heroic features about the Kneipp system. On arriving at Wörishofen the first thing that met my gaze was Sir Alfred, his hat rather on the back of his head, his face wearing its usual half-bored, half-amused expression, walking about barefoot in the snow with a pair of laced boots dangling from his arm. For a moment I thought he had taken leave of his senses, but learned this was an essential part of the cure and did the same myself later. And meanwhile the *Pfarrer* stood or rambled all day between the huts, with nothing under his thin old cassock but one linen garment! . . . There was also a convent attached to the community, in which the nuns brewed simple herb medicines under the *Pfarrer's* directions; but though they adored him they lived in perpetual dread lest the cure should be prescribed for them too, and carefully kept their little ailments to themselves. Of the rich, Kneipp had the greatest horror, taking from them only just enough to keep his sheds and cans going and enable him to treat the peasantry for nothing. One man, a peasant proprietor whose arm he had saved after a month's treatment, wept because his benefactor would only accept one mark, declaring he was rich and could afford to pay more (I must add that no one who knows them would credit such a trait in a Bavarian peasant, but this happened while we were there). At last the *Pfarrer* yielded; "Well," he said, "if you really are rich I will take one mark fifty pfennigs." In fact, as Sir Alfred said, Wörishofen was the only place he had come across where money was powerless — and this, he added, was the real point of interest, not the cure.

As far as I know, religion played no part in the system, but what with his rugged simplicity, his power, and his passionate faith in God, the *Pfarrer* always reminded me of an Old Testament figure with the quality of the perfect Christian thrown in. He needed all his faith just then, for during our stay he had a little run of ill luck; perhaps I brought the microbe with me. First there was a monk, a visitor from afar who lodged at the *Pfarrhof*. Kneipp saw at once

that nothing could be done, and was about to send him back to his monastery where he could be properly tended when he suddenly died, and the whole village accompanied the coffin to the parish bounds. He had had no *Anwendungen* and obviously the *Pfarrer* was not to blame; nevertheless he took the matter greatly to heart, and the peasants, who worshipped their prophet but as usual had stones in reserve, were inclined to throw a few now. Yet the amazement on all sides at this misfortune bore out their everlasting boast that though, of course, all could not be cured, no one was ever the worse for coming to Wörishofen.

And then followed another sad incident. A day or two afterwards my landlady met me, a touch of triumph in her manner, with the remark: "*Heute ist wieder Einer gestorben!*" (Another has died today); and this time it was difficult not to connect the cure and the disaster, for while water was being poured over the patient's shoulders he had had a stroke! He lived long enough for the last rites to be administered, and I can still see poor old Kneipp's tragic face as he said in his deep, steady voice: "*Gedankt sei Gott für sein seliges Ende — aber ach! es ist ein Jammer —*" (then a terrible sigh) "*aber gedankt sei Gott!*" (Thank God for his blessed end — but oh, how sad it is — yet God be thanked!) And meanwhile, for I was calling at the *Pfarrhof*, there stood cheery Fräulein Marie awe-struck and miserable; the little great-niece was rushing about claiming everyone's attention for her new doll, and the *Pfarrer's* horrid little "Spitz" shrieking rather than barking at Marco, its master not even telling it to be quiet. . . . When I got home my landlady and her friends were still gloating over the tragedy, agreeing that probably the cure was very dangerous, that to pour cold water over people at all, especially in the winter, was "*gegen die Natur*" (against nature), and so on. One thought of this man who had dedicated his life to others — rejecting money, promotion, honours, everything — and wondered if he feared that perhaps God was forsaking him in his old age. . . . Nothing in my life has brought home to me more painfully how cruel and ungrateful human beings can be, and I scored it up, perhaps unjustly, against the Bavarian peasant for ever.

CHAPTER XLII. *Winter 1889 to Spring 1890*

DURING these weeks began what, as I have said, was destined to be an eventful relation, my friendship with Pauline. Wondering how to give some idea of her personality, I remember a remark Lady Trevelyan once made to me at Nettlecombe, their home in Somersetshire; "If I were to go into Pauline's room," she said, "and find she had suddenly vanished, melted into air leaving no trace, it would hardly surprise me." There was neither sentiment nor apprehension in her manner, it was merely a characterization that conveys what for lack of a better word one might call the unearthly element about Pauline. Her extreme gentleness and delicate beauty had something to do with it, but these were only the garments of her soul. Full of enjoyment of life, a grand laughter — and this I think stands high on the list of merits — there was yet the abiding suggestion of a visitant from another planet lent to this world for the time being . . . and as it turned out not lent for long.

It was strange to realize that this most serene and contented of beings had been acquainted with physical pain from youth upwards, indeed was seldom free from it; here then was one key to her saintliness. But on another point enlightenment of a less distressing kind awaited me; it appeared that every man she met fell in love with her — generally two men at a time — and the lives of her mother and sisters, so they said, were sometimes made a burden to them by Pauline's disconsolates. Yet nothing in her demeanour would have led you to suspect she was the object of embarrassing homage — surely a rare and exquisite trait.

There are certain people who, without exactly insisting on their conquests, mysteriously impel their surroundings to raise them a pedestal, once placed on which the fact that they are universally sighed for becomes manifest to all. The thing develops into a tradition, a legend; one man catches the disease from another and passes it on to a third, and half the victims succumb before their eyes have met those of their enslaver. I do not believe that Helen of Troy was more beautiful, more admired, more desired, than thousands of other women, but each lover and friend felt moved to contribute a stone to the solid, soaring Cheops Pyramid from which she

dominates the ages and to which each passing generation adds its quota. And I feel convinced too that Helen was aware of and delicately encouraged these architectural promptings.

Well — among women thus formed, as Mr. Mantalini would have put it, to distract the senses of men, I know of one only, Pauline, who ignored and took no pleasure in her power. She must have listened to each inevitable declaration as if such a thing had never met her ears before, and having no doubt behaved with just the right blend of kindness, tact, and firmness, will have gone back with a sigh of relief to her twin realities, religion and music. Indeed I heard of a case, no doubt a specially painful one, when simultaneously with the bang of the front door of 74 Harley Street a shower of scales from Pauline's piano rent and refreshed the air. This sounds rather heartless, but if you are absolutely free from vanity and absorbed by two master passions, unsolicited love may well be a nuisance. No one's store of sympathy is limitless and there are only twenty-four hours in the day.

I often noticed how, quite unconsciously, she imposed her ways on all around her — merely by the penetrative strength of "a gentle noble temper, a soul as even as a calm." The quality of her spirit sometimes put her beyond one's reach; I did not always understand her, but was invariably and perfectly understood. There seemed to be no limit to her instinctive grasp of life and its intricacies; essential rays that got broken and dispersed on the rough surface of other minds passed easily and unbroken into hers. You could have been silent with her all your days and yet know you had become part of her mind. Assurances were neither given nor needed . . . her quiet reticence bred a faith that nothing could trouble.

I loved Lady Trevelyan, who worshipped and in many ways resembled Pauline, with the same kind of affection — a feeling from which her intense reserve and shyness would have made her shrink had she realized its existence. A pure-bred Milesian, she found Anglo-Saxon placidity rather a trial, as did my mother, and once remarked: "So many English people seem to live at such a *low ebb*; they speak so softly you can't hear them, they enjoy so discreetly that you'd never suspect it." And I also remember her declaring that she didn't want the United Kingdom or any other country to prosper as long as men disregard God's laws and look upon immo-

reality as a thing that goes without saying; as long as tradesmen hold that only by sharp practice can you make a fortune; as long as advertising a performance is considered more important than the performance itself. Gentle, wise, subtle, and yet infinitely simple and single-hearted, it was this underlying passionateness that I loved so in her. I once told Pauline I would rather confess to her mother than to any priest on earth, and pictured to myself with amusement how she would turn white with horror at the thought and flee upstairs, gently muttering prayers for herself and me.

Needless to say Lady Trevelyan had a great sense of humour — as essential a note in the ideal confessor as saintliness or anything else — and musically speaking even a greater critical faculty, perhaps, than Pauline. You had to finesse to get her opinion, but any amount of trouble was worth the deadly hitting on the nail that followed. Pauline had the same dislike of categorical statements, and in her case matters were further complicated by the side I used to call “Mrs. Winslow” — the Irish side. As she was intensely absent-minded (a very delightful quality), the soothing syrup would sometimes be administered hastily in a spirit of propitiation before the matter in hand had been fully grasped, but there was never any doubt as to her ultimate opinion. Another trait the two had in common — a curious one in such gentle people — was a faculty of getting white with anger; I remember first noticing it in Lady Trevelyan when we were talking about people who won’t take care of their health — a form of tiresomeness she had no patience with. The whole family were more or less on the same lines, and I have the impression that you might search in vain for their prototype outside the Roman Communion; to be honest I must add that these were among the very few devout Catholics I have met who struck me as full-fledged, responsible human beings.

What a simplification of things it is to speak the same language! I never realized this more strongly than in my relations with Pauline, who was fated to walk with me through a stretch of life in which we did not see eye to eye. By one short phrase in music, by a note sometimes, you can convey more to a fellow musician than by endless words; not specific things, of course, but lights and shades — subterranean movements of the soul, the memory of which plays in and out of your mutual consciousness and saves the situation just

as you are on the verge of a deadlock. It was the lack of any such mitigating medium that made itself felt between the Bensons and me, its presence that lifted my intercourse with Pauline high above rocks and brambles into hitherto unexplored regions of serenity.

We all went back to Munich in the middle of December; two days later the Trevelyans left for Cannes, and then came the worst nightmare of my life. I say it deliberately, for when the breach with Lisl had taken place I was well in mind and body and had never yet had to call up my reserves; now I was ill and morally at the end of my tether.

The search for lodgings was begun in appalling sleet and slush, and then, not till then, did I discover what Fate, in permitting me to drop at once into ideal quarters two months ago, had purposely hidden from me till the weather became impossible — namely, that furnished rooms for lady students of my type do not exist in Munich. The lunatic landlord had merely been a normal Munich burgher! If you were respectable, you lived at a pension (and as lady composers were scarce in those days, pianos on every floor were I suppose considered no deterrent); if you lived in rooms like a man, you were disreputable. . . . Quite simple.

Hounded from pillar to post, I at last found a room on the ground-floor — situation hateful both to rheumaticks and lovers of light; but as the landlady assured me there were no pianos, that all her other clients were students — that is, lodgers who are never in the house except from two a.m. to ten a.m. — and that the baby I heard crying was her great-granddaughter, whose mama was on a two days' visit, I engaged the room. It afterwards turned out that one of the students had a lady with him — a lady who called the filthy maid of all work "Fräulein," which gives an idea of the class — and that the baby was hers and the student's property. I had to fight for a table to write on, for a vanished armchair I had seen a few days back when engaging the room, for firewood, for briquettes, for everything, and was soon off again, rheumatism all over me, once more facing the same sleet and slush, the same insulting refusals to take in single ladies. Eventually I found another miserable room; again I was told there were no pianos in the place, and asking what the tramlings overhead might mean, learned it was only preparations

for the Christmas-tree. By this time I believed less and less the accounts given by landladies of their establishments, but how test the matter otherwise than by taking the rooms? A few days previously I had gone to call on Levi, with the idea that his influence might induce some decent owner of furnished rooms to admit me in spite of sex disabilities, but arriving at his door I had learned that he was ill in bed, with high fever and pains in his limbs. . . .

Because the incidents that now follow proved to be a turning-point in my life, because too, strange to say, contemporary words tell a personal story almost impersonally, I shall again let one of my letters speak for me. It was written to Nelly Benson on December 21, the day before I fled from the vicinity of the student, his lady, and their ever-squalling infant. I will not even correct misspelt words and weak-backed sentences — points which certainly did not escape the notice of my correspondent, who periodically drew up lists of words she could no longer bear to see massacred, and would have been incapable herself of literary slovenliness even at the point of death.

. . . Yes, you are right, I am ill; that is one reason why my letters have flagged; possibly too the cure at Wörishofen was *not* a happy thought. But all the same I'm glad and thankful I went there for that stay has revealed to me certain things about myself. Seeing what the Trevelyans' relation to God and the world is, loving Pauline at once almost as I did (I swear to you chiefly because of that but also because of herself), feeling so broken-hearted when they went away, finding my vaunted strength and calm gone, coming back to this miserable lodging . . . all this brought about a crisis.

And now let me tell you a detail. Pauline had left a little *Imitation de Jésus Christ* at her Hotel here and asked me to claim it for her; not to send it but to give it back when I should see her next. She said she had another but prized this one because her mother had given it to her. So I went to the Bellevue; nothing had been handed in at the Bureau, but their apartment was still unlet if I would like to take a look round. . . . I wonder if you can guess what it was going into those desolate rooms where I had been so happy? . . . To my joy I found the book under the sofa cushion, which will give you an idea both of Pauline and Bavarian housemaids, but struggling against the awful wind and snow from the mountains it must have got jerked out of my pocket, and when I got home . . . it was gone! I was in despair. I had thought per-

haps in her heart she had wanted me to keep it hoping I might read it, though as you can imagine I didn't ask her if this was so. Anyhow I had meant to . . . and now it was lost! . . . Well, I advertised, and O Nelly, last night it came back, almost like a message from him whom the book is about, but I have no time for reading now, for I clear out of this place to-morrow.

I can't tell you what these days have been. There is a piano in the house after all, though a long way off, but the faintest sound of a note makes me tremble all over. I have lain for hours on the sofa, powerless with fear of life, feeling that I am broken and done for. I thank God for two things, that Mary Fiedler is here, and Marco, for I know but for these two I should have killed myself. I felt I was going mad, losing control, yet hated the idea of leaving such a horrible legacy to the dear Fiedlers . . . and still more the thought of poor lonely distracted Marco! Then this book came back and I feel as if I had been purposely driven into my last entrenchments. I give in and am ready and longing to try and learn there is another refuge and strength than human love and my own powers. I know it will take long but I believe it won't be denied in the end.

You will wonder how all this came of the Trevelyans. Well, you see they are very "artistic" people, real artists at heart, all of them, and one, Pauline, has, as I told you, suffered much and will suffer more. These two things somehow made a way from her inner life to mine though we talked directly about it but little, and I don't think she has a notion that she reacted on me like that.

I cannot tell you how good Mary F. has been. I went to her yesterday to ask the doctor's address and broke down; she has a pitying way with me that does upset my fortitude, but perhaps it does good afterwards. She sees how my nerves are all weak and jarred, and is so unutterably dear to me. I told her all, why life looks so black, &c., and she made me swear if I felt like that again to send to her, which I will do. Of course she urged me to go and stay with them for a bit, but that is not what is wanted; I must, must stand on my own feet and this she understands. She told me that, as I knew, she always gives me a handsome present at Christmas (she is well off and loves giving) and that this year she means to give me money — that we had known each other now for ten years and she supposed I couldn't be proud towards *her*. Nor can I. If ever I am rich I shall do the same; when you know people are thinking not even of shillings but of pence, what is the good of giving them jewelry and so forth?

I think she has a perfect horror of Lisl since she realises things more,

I mean how my life was rooted in them, and also that owing to dear old mother it can't take root in England. Ah! how Lisl spoiled me for this sort of thing . . . but what I realise more strongly than anything is, that if I were rooted elsewhere I shouldn't mind it all as I do. O! and I have been so unwilling, so caring for other things. . . . But I will stop this account of my troubles. I don't know but what you are too young to write such a letter at all.

By the by the Pfarrer was not really upset in the depths of his soul by his patient dying, and when I left was full of two wonderful cures he is bringing about; one a man who has been in agony daily for ten years from a railway accident (concussion) and whom he has cured in six weeks; the other a blind man who is beginning to see.

While I have been writing Marco lies slumbering peacefully at my feet, little knowing what a definite part he has played in my career. The thought of him . . . nobody's dog . . . (he is awfully nervous) or even travelling alone to England, moved me . . . ah me, what was it? Marco, for one thing, and other things too. Thank God it is over and done with now.

Finally, to sum up the situation: (1) My life seems smashed up, for I don't think I can stand Germany without Lisl. (2) You know why England is out of the question. (3) I know the music in me isn't dead, only cowed into silence. (4) I at last believe — with relapses, but still believe — that a way may be found for me.

Farewell. E.

Looking through some hundred and fifty letters addressed to her, it is a relief to find that on two occasions only, both of this epoch, was poor Nelly harrowed in this way; but it is strange to see how little I seem to have realized what an enormous amount of courage is necessary to the coward's end.

Next day I moved into the new lodgings, of which I had a latch-key and where the trappings raged overhead as before. I had specially begged that the room be very warm, but the stove was out and not a soul in the place. As I had found elsewhere, there was no service, no machinery to meet my case — I was a waif and stray; the sort of ladies who inhabit furnished rooms have maids, and as I said, students are never at home. So I went into the kitchen to look for wood and noticed a letter addressed to me lying on the table; it was from Conrad to say that, like Levi, Mary was ill in bed, with pains all over her and a temperature. . . . After seventy-five years

of quiescence the influenza epidemic, unrecognized as such for the time being, had again put in an appearance! . . . For the first time in my life I should spend Christmas alone . . . and in this place!

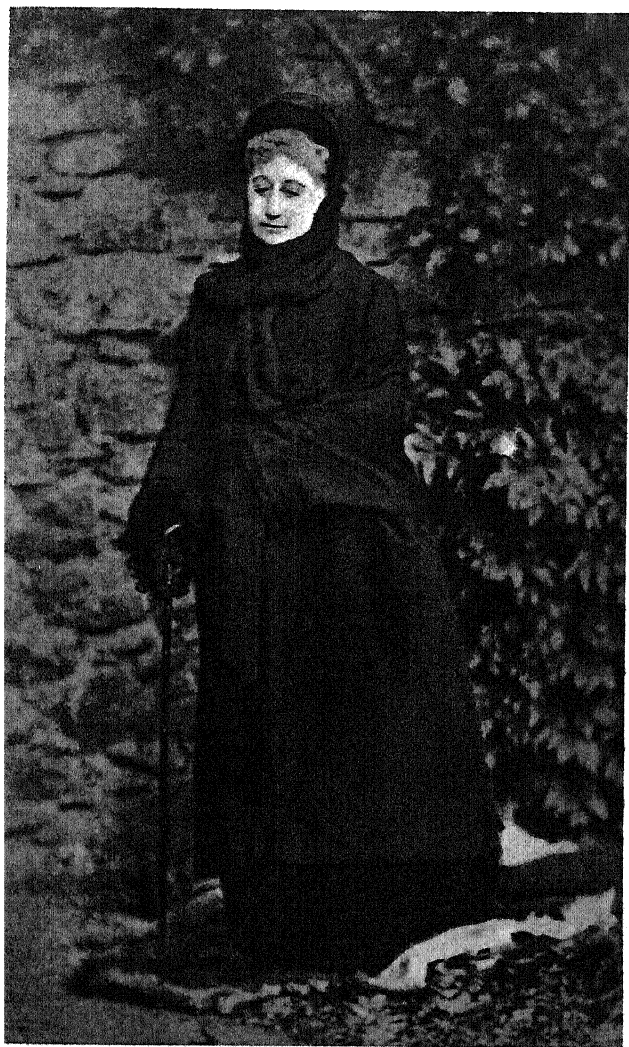
That night in bed I read a few sentences in the *Imitation*, as one might finger a shilling or two of a fortune which may, or may not, turn out to be meant for you, all the while possessed by a not unreasonable presentiment that the worst was yet to be. Next morning I was awakened at five-thirty by what I was told was the sweeps and, as the days of closed shops were approaching, went out to buy a few necessaries. I remember coming back at midday and falling with a flop into the armchair; then crash, bang, as if to welcome me home, with a few violent well-known chords a stentorian voice on the floor above launched into the recitative of a celebrated scene in what we English call "Grand Opera." . . . I rushed upstairs and was informed that the new tenor of the *Hof Oper*, Herr So-and-So, had taken the suite overhead for six months! . . . That afternoon, although in this case I had been obliged to prepay a month's rent, the frantic hunt for the non-existent was taken up again under the usual weather conditions, and continued till long after sundown, by which time I was well in the grip of familiar symptoms — burning heat and shivering fits; and when I came home the tenor was still studying his new part.

Next day was Christmas Eve. I lay on the sofa, far too ill to go out room-hunting, and again opened the *Imitation*. The tenor boomed away overhead but presently I ceased to hear him, reading and reading throughout the day . . . reading at the restaurant where I tried to eat a midday meal . . . reading on into the night . . . awaking after an hour or two to light my lamp and begin reading again. If I did not remember that it was Christmas Eve it would seem to me that I read ceaselessly for days and days. . . . Now all was clear to me; I had always thought of myself, and of nothing else . . . of what I had to achieve in life, of what my duty to myself was . . . always myself. No wonder I had failed; no wonder all I had touched, no matter with what excellent intentions, had turned to dust and ashes; no wonder that even Lisl was lost to me and that I had gone into the desert in vain. . . . Now my path was clear — music must be thrown overboard too; there was only one road to happiness, renunciation. The Prior had said it would

take many, many years to learn that lesson, but life had moved swiftly and violently with me, and in five I had learned it, so I believed, once and for ever. . . . I must go home again and take up the burden I had tried to lay down; no one would know more than that I was ill and needed home care, which was true. Of course I would try to go on with music at Frimhurst . . . but as well try to make water run up hill. Well, renunciation meant that. . . .

Next day I telegraphed home to say I was ill and coming back, and then dragged myself somehow to the Christmas Morning Service in the little English Church. I stayed there in a dark corner, weeping, weeping . . . stayed on while others were communicating. I remember one or two people glanced at me curiously, and that the officiant paused a moment when all the communicants had returned to their places and looked my way before turning again to the altar. I did not communicate myself, but went home full of a great peace, though so ill that nothing but a long habit of organizing my own journeys can have carried me automatically through the next twenty-four hours.

I have never quite known how I got home. There were no dining cars on that train, and I knew that as the hours wore on I might become too ill to get out and eat at the buffet. So I bought, I forget on what principle, a piece of fillet of beef, cut it up raw into small cubes, and filled a soda-water bottle with weak brandy and water — strange fare for one in a raging fever! The only accommodation for dogs was a sort of square tunnel running under the luggage van. It was as long as the breadth of the van, but not high enough for Marco to stand up, nor wide enough for him to turn round in, and I shall never forget the anguish of shoving that huge frightened dog backwards into the horrible place and seeing the door locked on his poor white nose. I slept or dozed most of the way, occasionally chewing the juice out of a cube or two and putting up what remained in a bit of newspaper for Marco, together with some broken biscuit; and whenever I could during that night and the next day, I staggered through the snow and storm to the torture-chamber to have a little reassuring conversation with him through the ventilation holes, bribing the guard to bring water and let me feed him now and again. Throughout that journey I was too ill to read, but held the little red book in my hand all the way, and



H.I.M. the Empress Eugénie
(From a snapshot)

am as certain as of anything in life that but for that amulet I could never have reached home. I have no recollection of the arrival except as usual of Mother's welcome, but know I was a few days in bed, generally with fever and always in pain somewhere or other . . . and then executed the usual lightning recovery.

One incident of the convalescent period has remained in my mind because it struck me as comic, and so very characteristic of my mother. The occasion was the appearance at dessert of her tonic, solemnly handed on a silver tray by the footman; this reminding me that I had forgotten my own medicine, I jumped up to fetch it, saying:

*"For her grief so lovely¹ shown
Made me think upon mine own."*

Seeing that Bishop's "As it fell upon a day" had once been in her own repertory, I rather expected praise for what I considered an apt quotation; her only response however was to say very impressively: "You know, dear, this is not *medicine*, it's a *tonic*." But when I reproached her with lack of appreciation she exclaimed remorsefully: "Well, it's a great shame, for no one makes me feel as *clever* as you do!" . . . How I cherished, and still cherish, that little compliment!

Early in the New Year Bob was gazetted to the 21st Lancers and sailed for India in March. Throughout those two months Mother's bearing with him, a certain bigness about the way she abstained from giving advice or otherwise tampering with his freedom, impressed me deeply. But magnificently as she played up, his going cut her to the heart, and when a day or two after he had gone she said quietly: "I shan't see Bob again," I was more thankful than ever at having come home.

Meanwhile she had one pleasure to look forward to, for rather to my surprise Manns had at once accepted my *Serenade* and put it on one of his April programmes. This would be the first public performance of any orchestral work of mine, and indeed of any work at all in England. I was then new to the business of one more desk of violins being required at the last minute — of suddenly discover-

¹ The word is really "lively."

ing that all the percussion was played by one man (or, if you had put it all in one part, by three men), and similar complications. And through it all Pauline burned like a steady light beside me, warm and quiet, helpful and practical.

When the great day came the excitement at home was immense, even Papa, who had never been at a real concert in his life, insisting on being present. The *Serenade* was admirably rendered, and since it was a first work, one could more or less count on a good reception; but regardless of how that might be, he had ready in his pocket a short telegram to Bob in India: "Great success," which no doubt would have been dispatched in any case.

I was not sitting in the hall myself, but afterwards learned what had occurred on the family benches.

No sooner was the first movement over than Papa rose to send off the telegram — and get away himself; pulled down by Mother, he attempted the same thing after the second, and again after the third movement. But after the fourth and last, having given up all hope, he remained patiently sitting, and thus had the gratification of seeing his daughter warmly called to the platform by that most delightful of audiences. I went home by a later train than the family, and when I met him before dinner he was beaming with delight, and said: "Well, you had quite a jobation."

A strange thing had happened at that concert. When summoned to the front I naturally looked towards the seats where the family were installed, and, to my amazement, sitting just behind my mother was a man with a long beard whom for half a moment I did not recognize; but there was no mistaking the face I had always known as clean-shaven but for a moustache — a face I had not looked upon for many years — it was H. B. He had been passing through London on his way to America and, seeing my name on a poster, had run down to the Crystal Palace. I afterwards learned that when Violet was claiming her reserved seat at the ticket office a strange man had said to her: "I beg your pardon, but surely you must be a sister of Ethel Smyth?" We had imagined no two people were less like than I and Violet, but H. B. recognized the family type instantly. After the concert we met in the corridor, had tea together, and that night he started for Liverpool.

The result of the production of the *Serenade* was that other works of mine were now accepted for performance without difficulty, and suddenly, to my delight, I found that the power of work had come back. For one thing, at last I was at peace; the Munich mood was no passing one, and for the next eighteen months, in spite of arduous work, at the bottom of my soul was one thought only — Christ. Hatred and contempt of Lisl fell away from me never to return, and though her action was as incomprehensible to me as ever, at that time my own failings and shortcomings were enough for me. I never lost the sense of our fate being interlinked, but if I perhaps hoped that some day things might alter, that hope played no part in the scheme. Never again was her peace troubled by useless remonstrances, and I steadily turned my thoughts in another direction, as one who dreads vertigo might force his eyes away from the precipice. . . . And I remember, too, another thought that was brushed aside as dangerous, or at least futile; it occurred to me one day that Thomas à Kempis would certainly have disapproved of Shakespere! . . . All the same I went on reading the plays, but not the Sonnets and other poems that too obviously base on what the author of the *Imitation* would have called the carnal affections.

Meanwhile life at home assumed a different aspect; things in my mother that used to drive me frantic seemed not only bearable but of little consequence. And now a sort of eventual fairness came into play; if an argument could be kept in smooth channels she would presently admit that she had been "trying," and one day she amused and touched me by recalling that her grandmother used to say of the family she had married into: "The Straceys are the *Jingle* family, my dear, much brilliancy and no foundation." But I could assure her, without flattery, that this was not her case!

As striking proof of the altered state of things I may mention that the old, old subject of economy was now discussed between the three of us without heat, and whereas six short months ago Bob and I had been informed it was d—d impertinent to put in our oar at all, I now found myself privately invited by one parent to back up schemes of retrenchment devised against the other. I remember a drama concerning a horse and a carpet that played for several months. My father, who objected to reducing the stud, put forth as excuse that "your mother likes going out with the pair,"

which was quite true. Thereupon Mother heroically took to a one-horse brougham, and while she was breakfasting in bed as usual, dipping pieces of thin bread and butter into her tea (a horrid practice she defended by pointing out that cream and butter both come from the cow) I would be asked to hint to Papa that his excuse was no longer valid. Meanwhile certain useless trees had been marked down and valued at ninety pounds, but long before they were felled, Mother, who had a way of suddenly getting bored with perfectly sound carpets and curtains, decided to spend the sum on a new dining-room carpet — about as unnecessary a piece of extravagance as could have been thought of! In this case it was my father who beckoned me into his room after luncheon and suggested I might bring influence to bear on “your mother.”

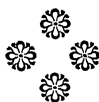
I forget how this particular tug-of-war ended, but remember being asked to look into household expenses generally, and finding that the yard dog, who notoriously would not look at dog-biscuits, consumed eighty-four per month according to the bill. Also that however long it may take to argue the hind leg off a donkey, it took me a week to argue away a certain garden boy whose presence involved other complications and expenses; and a month later, in spite of having been theoretically dismissed, he was still in our service and, as before, sailing boats on the canal in working hours. I had often managed in past days to command my temper for about a week, and as neither of my elders ever stuck to their resolutions of economy for more than seven days, the problem now was to keep them up to the collar without causing them to jib. Strange to say, as far as I remember, though little may have been achieved there were no rows of any kind, and the persistence of my lamb-like mood certainly impressed them, for I have contemporary evidence to the fact. It would indeed have been strange had such a passionate desire for betterness borne no fruit, and from her last pathetic letter to me ² I have the consolation of knowing that my presence in the house was a stay and comfort to Mother.

That spring the invention of ladies' bicycles was to demonstrate her superiority to stupid prejudice. In the *Illustrated London News* were to be seen pictures of wild women of the usual unprepossessing pioneer type riding about Epping Forest, and I at once decided to

² Appendix, p. 490, No. 2.

buy a bicycle. Aunts, cousins, and friends were horrified — never has the word “indelicate” been bandied about with more righteous conviction. But my mother said this was perfect nonsense; “When we are dead,” she would reply to objectors, “she won’t be able to keep horses, and I can think of nothing more sensible than her buying a bicycle.” And buy one I did — with bad paces too, for pneumatic tyres were not yet invented; I also took lessons at a place called Cycledom, and the scene of my first unaided attempts was, oh wonder! the gravel sweep in front of Lambeth Palace, where I even had the honour of giving instruction to the Dean of Windsor. (Needless to say this was during the brief period of favour with the Archbishop.)

Strange to say, one then looked upon this very useful and sometimes pleasant way of getting from one place to another as a form of sport, and though for many a long day to come no “nice” women rode bicycles, I pursued my solitary course with enthusiasm. By degrees, as we know, the thing caught on, and one day, about eighteen months later, when I met Mrs. R., the arch-prude of the neighbourhood, wobbling along the high road, and beheld her fall off her machine at my feet to explain that she had taken to it in order to avoid having out the horses on Sunday, it was clear that the indelicacy ghost had been finally laid.



CHAPTER XLIII. *Spring and Summer 1890*

AMONG the pleasant things that befell early in that year was making the acquaintance of Sir Arthur Sullivan, who came up to me in the house we met in, introduced himself as “colleague” so delightfully, with such a perfect blend of chaff and seriousness (the exact perfection of cadence there is in his work), that my one idea ever after was to see him whenever I could. He told me to show him a specimen of orchestration and was pleased on the whole, but I remember his putting his finger on a rather low flute passage and

saying: "Now here's a very pretty little pattern *on paper*, but —" (here he pointed to some strenuous violins) "what's the poor chap to do against *that*?" And then he added: "An artist has got to make a shilling's worth of goods out of a penn'orth of material, and here *you* go chucking away sovereigns for nothing!" — a sound statement on Art, and also a well-deserved and kindly bit of criticism. One day he presented me with a copy of the full score of *The Golden Legend*, adding: "I think this is the best thing I've done, don't you?" and when truth compelled me to say that in my opinion *The Mikado* is his masterpiece, he cried out: "Oh you wretch!" But though he laughed I could see he was disappointed.

Later on, inasmuch as I lived in the neighbourhood where his boyhood had been passed and to which he always hoped to return, I became his informal house agent, as will be gathered from one or two letters of his given later; but alas! he never reached the old age which he counted on passing among the Camberley pinewoods. His friendship was a great musical stimulus, and one day I wrote to Mrs. Benson, not without intentionally grim emphasis: "May evil befall me if I look back from music."

During the spring months I saw a great deal of her, and our relations went through a curious phase. My conversion, as Evangelicals would have called it, could but give her great pleasure (if one may use the word in such a connection), but as regards methods we were not of one mind. When I was young, engrossed as we all were in the story of the Oxford Movement, I had been very High Church, and later, when belief passed, this aspect of Anglicanism had never lost its grip on my imagination; naturally therefore the new religious conviction that now welled up within me poured itself into the old channel. I may add that an aversion to Low Church views and ways, which as I tried to show elsewhere was instinctive and violent, had been confirmed by many a subsequent experience, the type, the attitude of mind towards sacred things being the same whether met with in England or Germany. For instance a certain Frau von Bohlen (a dear old lady whom one might call grandmother of Big Bertha, for her son married Krupp's heiress) once informed me that while nursing a niece she suddenly saw the patient was sinking, and being at her wits' end knelt down and prayed as she had never prayed in her life for guidance. "And suddenly," she said, "from

behind that screen, as plainly as I am speaking to you now, an unearthly voice uttered the words: '*Give her a glass of old brandy.*'" . . . Now, Mrs. Benson might possibly have found this remark rather crude, but it certainly would not have sent her into paroxysms of amused disgust as it did me, for her own sympathies were at that time strongly Evangelical.

Among other things she was an upholder, and sometimes a holder, of informal prayer meetings. Extemporaneous prayer is, as we know, part of the Presbyterian scheme; but firstly the ministers are trained to it, which takes away what I cannot but feel as the offensiveness of the thing, and secondly the training sometimes results in a Dr. MacGregor. But it is quite another affair when the performer is an amateur — perhaps one of the many English ladies of high degree who manage in some mysterious manner to combine saintliness with the social whirl. I remember an occasion when one of these wound up her address with the gentle question: "Do you think, dear friends, we shall smile in Heaven? . . . *I — do!*" — whereupon she favoured us with the identical saccharin smile that did so much execution in society. And as L. T. tramped out of that meeting I heard her muttering low and thunderously: "If people are going to smile like that in Heaven, I don't think I want to go there." These and other Low Church practices affected me like "foolish basses," and not even for the sake of her who had been my sole support during the evil years could I disguise the fact.

And yet she saw — how could a woman of that type fail to see? — the humours of Evangelicism. Once when I was at Addington, Nelly, on practical information bent, asked a certain rector's wife what they were doing about getting a new curate; the answer, delivered with a broad, beaming smile, was: "We are praying for one," and Mrs. Benson was delighted to hear that Nelly had merely remarked: "I should have thought advertising would be a better plan." I remember too that when Mrs. Benson herself asked this lady if they meant to choose a "converted" man and risk his being a gentleman, or *vice versa*, the eager reply was that above all he must be "converted." But here the rector broke in with: "No, no, converted or not I mean to have a gentleman," and my enthusiastic endorsement of this point of view "jarred" a little on Mrs. Benson. In fact, strange to relate, we were now farther apart than in the days of my unbelief.

There had of course been a moment when, unknown to anyone, especially the Trevelyan, I had looked longingly Romewards and read every available book on the question, but the mood had passed. Everything narrows of course to the supreme question: how can you best save your soul? But without going so far as the old Duke of Cambridge, who once said: "Believe me, *every change is for the worse*," I was a Conservative, and the idea of leaving the Church you were born in, and rejecting a formula to which you had never given a fair trial because another attracts you more potently, seemed contemptible and never really struck root. None the less I felt that the type of saintliness of Newman, whose *Apologia* I read in one sitting between Edinburgh and London, was only thinkable in a celibate priesthood, and so strongly did his personality draw me that in the August of that year, when staying in Norfolk, I was contemplating the difficult feat of returning home across country via Birmingham, in order to ask his blessing; not in the least as a first step towards Rome — that phase was behind me — but merely to carry his benediction about with me like a relic. Two days before my departure, when, immersed in Bradshaw, I was dizzily planning the journey, my host, who had just opened his newspaper, exclaimed: "Hullo, Cardinal Newman is dead."

The Hunters then lived near Durham, and while staying with them in September I saw a good deal of Uncle Charles's old friend Dean Lake, who showed me many of Newman's letters and talked to me by the hour of their common youth and the differences that parted them in the end. Rather pompous and unapproachable at a distance, I found him another man at close quarters, and remember his saying how often in his career as Churchman he had seen men of lofty character, fervent piety, and unequalled scholarship such as my uncle go to the wall for lack of some little gift — possibly worthless in itself — that opens the door to preferment. "Why in God's name," he cried, "should I be Dean of Durham, and Charles Scott hobnobbing with pious old women at Bournemouth?"

If I mention what appears to be an irrelevant fact — that I played lawn tennis incessantly at Durham — it is because among my confederates were two jolly boys, nephews of a shy celibate Canon who, we were informed, used to watch the games from his window, the

court being in the Quadrangle. Twenty years later, women being eligible at the Durham University for honours, the degree of *Mus. Doc. Dunelm.* was offered me, and scanning the list of backers I discovered that my name had been proposed by a person whose face I had never seen — the celibate Canon behind the window curtain! Thus it was not to music but to lawn tennis that I owe a title which compensates in some measure for the non-realization of my youthful ambition — “to be made a Peeress in my Own Right because of Music.”

From Durham I went to stay with some people (I can't remember their name) who had scandalized the world a few months previously by having a “pink wedding,” the breakfast being followed by a lawn meet and a rattling run — proceedings that I daresay would leave reporters cold nowadays. And finally, after that, I paid a memorable visit to Addington. Mainly from curiosity, certainly not from sentimental reasons, an experiment that always tempts me is the bringing together of new and old friends. My mother being favourable to both Nelly and Pauline, they had already met at Frimhurst, and liked each other so much that Mrs. Benson had begged me to find out if so devout a Catholic would condescend to stay at the house of a heretical Archbishop. I now therefore had the delight of seeing all the family, including His Grace, go down before Pauline, and hearing Mrs. Benson remark: “If *she* hasn't made a Roman of you, you must indeed be a good Anglican!”

I was; and this fact became the basis of a precarious favour with the Archbishop, already spoken of. He actually went so far as to inform me one day at luncheon, by way of a stately joke, that I was a better Churchwoman than his wife — which according to my ideas was not saying much, for often and often in the heat of controversy I would accuse Mrs. Benson of being a Dissenter; to which she would reply, in the same key: “By all means! if not caring two straws about the Apostolic Succession” (my special subject) “spells Dissent.” And eventually, with the approval of both parties, though not in the same spirit, a long dreary border of spiky flowers at Lambeth was called “The Apostolic Succession.”

Another point which won me for the time being the approval of the Archbishop was my interest in the Mission to the Assyrian Church, the only Mission of which I could say as much.

Few people have ever heard of this Church, an offshoot of Nestorianism that is still defying the Turk somewhere near Urmi, and had appealed some years back to Archbishop Tait for help. Driven from one rocky fastness to another, these few thousand Christians had suffered and survived for hundreds of years, resisting not only the sword of the Mohammedan but the more insidious persuasive methods of Roman Catholics and American Unitarians — meanwhile handing down by oral tradition a Liturgy, the significance of many details in which had been forgotten. With less written word to go on than the British Constitution itself, this Liturgy was eventually printed at Oxford (for the first time in history) in the middle of the nineteenth century, and Oxford men, attached to the Mission, expounded to Assyrian priests the meaning of their own rites! In all this there was a strong imaginative appeal; I loved too to think that the one Church to which this ancient community could turn without fear of being devoured in the warmth of welcome was the Anglican Church; and though my support could have been counted in shillings, it was unfailing. Indeed such was my zeal that I not only got up entertainments for the benefit of the Fund, but impartially pestered everyone I know for subscriptions; on which principle kind Mr. Jack Tennant once found his Monte Carlo winnings diverted into quite an unexpected channel.

And yet a third point in my favour was my being so greatly taken up with the trial of the saintly and celibate Bishop of Lincoln. I found the whole proceedings most impressive, the Archbishop absolutely in his element, and his judgment very fine as to both matter and manner; in fact there was only one flaw, the thought of the beloved family dotted about the Palace in suitably upholstered bedrooms, and now waiting to congratulate husband and father! . . .

Thus then, for a while, things went so well with me under the shadow of the Anglican and Assyrian Churches that one day Arthur Benson told me he thought I had won his father's heart at last! Alas, if so I did not keep my winnings much longer than Mr. Jack Tennant kept his, for as time went on he reverted with increased emphasis to his first instinct of strong antipathy. Eventually I got so terribly on his nerves that it was found expedient to smuggle me into Lambeth by back entrances and hastily herd me into side

rooms; in short, the scenes of the memorable sojourn in Venice with Frau von Stockhausen were enacted on sacred English soil. It appeared that even the mere sight of me from a window, strolling with Mrs. Benson along "the Apostolic Succession," would infallibly wreck whatever work the Archbishop might happen to be engaged on at the moment; and though I was assured that some of the boys' friends were in the same case, and though it is rather flattering in a way to inspire so intense an aversion, the situation was more exciting than agreeable. Yet such was my veneration for Dr. Benson, my intense appreciation for all he said, and wrote, and did as priest, that I bore him no ill-will, and often think, among other sympathetic memories, of a little scene at Addington that touched and impressed me — the Head of the Church sitting at the feet of his guest, Mr. Spurgeon, and humbly soliciting information as to the spiritual needs of the London poor. In short, he dwells in my memory as one of the loftiest-souled men I have known.

Mrs. Benson once said it was rather hard that any resentment I might feel on the subject of the Archbishop's really outrageous rudeness seemed cherished against her. This was quite true; if the men of the family are insupportable it is generally the fault of the women for not standing up to them — and *vice versa*, as we so often remarked to each other at home!

In order to round off the story of this phase of intense belief — belief in the strictest sense of the word — I ought to say that during this and the ensuing year — in short, for some time after these memoirs close — I was composing a Mass, which was eventually produced in London in 1893. Into that work I tried to put all there was in my heart, but no sooner was it finished than, strange to say, orthodox belief fell away from me, never to return; and, ridiculous as it seems, the fact that Thomas à Kempis would have condemned Shakespeare's Sonnets had a great deal to do with it. True, I remembered wise Lady Trevelyan once commenting on the ease with which one brushes aside exaggerations of specialists (such as abound in this book written by a monk for monks) and asking who would take literally the command to hate your father and mother for Christ's sake? Nevertheless I held, and still hold, that it is impossible to reconcile the teaching of the *Imitation* with many of the

circumstances of an artist's life . . . or with many of the movements of his soul. Further, it is not given to everyone to accept dogma, and I for one had evidently not the gift. H. B., the most deeply religious spirit and the most inveterate enemy of creeds I ever met, used to infuriate me in after life by attributing this particular development to influenza; but if that be the explanation what matter? Who shall fathom the Divine plan? Only this will I say, that at no period of my life have I had the feeling of being saner, wiser, nearer truth. Never has this phase, as compared to others that were to succeed it, seemed overwrought, unnatural, or hysterical; it was simply a religious experience that in my case could not be an abiding one.

One of the drawbacks of writing about a comparatively recent epoch is that you cannot speak freely of the living. To those who love human nature the faults of people you are fond of are as precious as their virtues; but this is delicate ground, and those who do not care about executing fancy portraits had better leave contemporaries alone — a consideration which will explain my reticence as to members of my own dear family, once they had been piloted in these pages out of almost prehistoric days. Again, for other reasons, much cannot be said on a subject that is now in the very forefront of my mind, inasmuch as by this time we had become standard guests in the household of the Empress Eugénie.

What this admission to a world in which French was habitually spoken meant to my mother can be imagined, and as the Empress and some of the household spoke English, it was no bar to my father's gratification when bidden to dine at Farnboro' Hill that he had no French. At that time the Empress wore gorgeously long trains of an evening; perhaps nine feet of heavy black silk trailed behind her as she walked down the corridor to the dining-room; and on one occasion, following in her wake, engaged in affable conversation with the lady on his arm, my father gradually marched up the whole length of that train. Being very short-sighted, and its wearer far too kind to remonstrate, he was quite unconscious of what was happening till she was bent backwards in an arc.

My mother's special ally was Madame le Breton, Dame d'Honneur, formerly the Empress's "Lectrice," a witty, fiery Greek whose

legendary beauty was still eloquent though at that time she was over seventy. In spite of the chastening influence of court life I never met with a temperament of greater violence, and in later years she used to say to me regretfully: "*Ah! comme vous me plaisiez mieux dans le temps où vous disiez tout ce qui vous passait par la tête — à tort et à travers!*" . . . Having lived only twenty years in England she knew not a single word of English, and as my father greatly desired to be civil to this good friend of my mother's, especially as she was General Bourbaki's sister, the intercourse between them was remarkable to watch. Many years older than the Empress, she was nearly stone blind and walked with a stick, and on their travels together sympathetic journalists were often led astray. References to the "bowed and infirm Sovereign" rather amused the Empress, who in 1890 was straight as a dart, equal to a ten-mile walk, and has always looked at least twenty years younger than her age; but driven home in the right quarter by her secretary, M. Pietri, who was fond of teasing, they greatly irritated his venerable colleague, whose passionate vitality resented the imputation of age and infirmity.

I remember when I was well over thirty incautiously remarking that some view I had just expressed would probably not commend itself to a woman of her years, and the retort was: "*Et vous, ma chère, malgré votre extrême jeunesse vous savez très bien que ce que vous dites là sont des bêtises.*" No one had less patience with *bêtises* than Madame le Breton. At one time there was a monk at the Farnboro' Priory whose ineptitudes in the pulpit got on her nerves to such an extent that she implored the ever-tolerant Empress to suggest he had better not be allowed to preach. One Sunday I persuaded a clergyman-cousin of mine, one of the J. clan, to attend afternoon service at the Mausoleum Church, and during the sermon the monk's remark: "*La Sainte Vierge a toujours aimé Paris,*" was followed by such a crash from the Farnboro' Hill pew that everyone jumped; it was Madame le Breton, who in her fury had aimed a violent kick at the wooden partition. We all know that because our serious-minded Victorian Court, which Parisians would not have put up with for a month, had not been faithfully reproduced across the Channel, certain foolish people charged the Imperial *régime* with going too far in the other direction. Hence my

cousin demurred to this account of the B.V.'s preferences and muttered in his beard: "I don't think she can have liked Paris much during the Empire."

As for M. Pietri, the subtlest, wittiest, hottest-tempered, and kindest of typical Corsicans, whose existence was one burning flame of chivalrous devotion to his Sovereign Lady, when he died everyone who knew him felt not only grief at her irreparable loss but a sense of personal impoverishment. He was one of those pure golden people who nevertheless see things as they are, and, to me at least, his opinion on almost any subject was of value. I remember once expressing surprise that a certain exceptionally kind-hearted woman we knew so often failed in kindness of judgment when to take the other line demanded some moral courage, and Pietri replied: "*Être foncièrement bonne et avoir du caractère, voilà deux choses différentes.*" I daresay it was a truism, but it struck me a good deal and has often modified the severity of subsequent appreciations. There are two incidents trembling on the point of my pen, after relating which one might confidently add: "Such was Pietri, such is the Empress!" — so characteristic and exquisite an impression do they give of both. Alas! both these stories have to be rejected as possibly too intimate. . . .

In the years immediately following the date at which these memoirs close I was to owe to the Empress, one way and another, the demolition of some of the barriers that block an unknown artist's road into the open, not to speak of the blessed certainty of contact, almost at my own doors, with an original and remarkable mind. I still enjoy that privilege, and the discretion observed as regards the living is more than ever incumbent in this instance. But one point which is of psychological interest may perhaps be mentioned without offence.

During all these years, strongly as she is attracted by beauty in others, I have never heard the Empress refer to the loveliness that once turned the head of the world. . . . Yet maybe some obscure reaction of this supreme record accounts for her impatience, not to say exasperation, if physical charms are spoken of in connection with the old. I quoted elsewhere something the Duchesse de Mouchy once said about time revealing the essentials of beauty, and can well

imagine what the comment would have been had the Empress overheard that remark!

But if it was true of her in the sense intended in 1883, there is another sense in which it is true today. The lines of a character nobly planned, qualities such as courage, chivalry, sincerity, magnanimity to others, pitilessness to self, and above all unutterable and unwearied kindness to and thought for all — these are essentials that may well become more manifest with years; especially if the mind and sympathies have been kept young by an amazing interest in life itself, whether as regards politics, the march of science, or the birth of new ideas. . . . The Empress is no longer a reigning sovereign, none has an interest in laying exaggerated tributes at her feet; for this reason there is some point in adding that every soul who has the privilege of really knowing her would agree, reading the above words, that they represent less than the truth. But to say more here would not be seemly.

Yet there is one drawback to this particular frequentation; history is found to have lost part of its interest, in that your faith in “the Legend” has departed for good. To mention one detail only; if the word “frivolous” has been applied to the most fundamentally serious spirit you have known — and time cannot alter the main lines of character — what of other historical reputations? . . .

But one point can hardly escape the notice of posterity. Nearly half a century has elapsed since the fall of the Second Empire, and in all these years — betrayed, falsely accused, vilified — the Empress has attacked no one, nor uttered one single word in her own defence. It was perhaps with this and other facts in his mind that Lord Rosebery wrote in the copy he sent her of his *Napoleon: the Last Phase*, a dedication so exquisite that I pencilled it into my own copy.

*To the surviving Sovereign of Napoleon's dynasty
The Empress,
who has lived on the summits of splendour, sorrow,
and catastrophe
with supreme dignity and courage.*

CHAPTER XLIV. *Autumn 1890 to January 1891*

LATE in the last autumn that will be relived in these pages I went down to stay with the Trevelyans at Nettlecombe, and much upset the aged local clergyman by urging him to hold Early Celebrations daily in the parish church. Perhaps it is because I was so peacefully happy there that I remember little about that one and only visit to the home so soon lost to my friends — for dear Sir Alfred died in the following year. But one typical instance of his common sense and dislike of exaggeration I well recollect. A Catholic friend of theirs, of the strenuous aggressive type he had scant sympathy with, was relating in admiration how the Prior of a newly founded monastery obliged his priests to sit on the floor. Sir Alfred snorted; “I suppose,” he said, “the next thing will be to make them try and sit on the ceiling.” . . . Of course there were endless discussions on religion with Pauline, discussions invariably started by me, and one night I had such a completely absurd dream on the same lines that I instantly wrote it down, and eventually copied it on a spare page of my terrible old collection of youthful dramas and poems. I believe the stage of relating dreams is one degree below anecdotage, but this particular one was so characteristic of all the people concerned that I cannot refrain from giving it — especially as its core might well be a genuine hagiological extract.

The entry in the book is thus:

I, Ethel Smyth, who never improve upon anecdotes at the expense of truth, dreamed the following dream, at the termination of which I rushed into the room of my R.C. friend, Pauline Trevelyan, and related it.

The Dream

I had successfully persuaded Lady Trevelyan and Pauline to go to a Celebration at a rather High Church. The Altar was beautifully got up, and the Celebrant in white vestments. It distressed me however a good deal that on this particular occasion tea and bread and butter should be handed round before the Service; I feared these R.C.'s would think it irreverent. The priest went up to the Altar, turned round, and said: “Now I will tell you an anecdote; when St. Augustine bade St. Patrick



Henry Brewster ("H.B."), about 1897

goodbye he said: "The thing that touched me most was, that as I was saying farewell to you I found one of your tears in my eye." At this point I observed Lady Trevelyan lean over towards Pauline, evidently casting doubt, rapidly and in an undertone, on the authenticity of the anecdote. The Priest, noticing this, stepped down from the Altar and said: "May I ask if you have any objections to make?" — "O no, Sir," hastily replied the ever-polite Pauline, "no objection — we were only . . ." At this point I broke in with "You must not mind what these ladies say; they are Roman Catholics and unaccustomed to weigh historic evidence. But I have often had the pleasure of proving them to be in the wrong and no doubt shall be able to do it on this occasion." . . . (Here the housemaid entered.)

Frimhurst. Copied into this book Dec. 1890.

When I got home again I went off on a long bicycle ride into the next county, in order, at the request of Nelly (who was coming to us that week), to make discreet enquiries concerning a young lady reported by her parents to be going off her head. The result was baffling; harmony prevailed, the daughter seemed in high favour, and one could learn nothing; but the expedition was far from fruitless, for on it I made a chance discovery that gave rise to many a moral reflection in the vein of Dr. Watts. In that same county was a rectory inhabited by what Mrs. Benson, who had known them in her Wellington College days, declared to be the ideal of a stupid family — and I, who had known them slightly for ages myself, considered that if anything she understated the case. Well; I now learned that all day long the women of that household sat together in dead silence, working tapestry so exquisite that some day specimens will doubtless be a cherished feature of the South Kensington Museum — further, that for years and years the mother's spare hours had been devoted to painting the ceiling of the church! . . . On our Cornish tour four years ago we had raved about an old clergyman who had spent his life in similar fashion, and here was the same thing going on unheeded at our very doors! As a matter of fact I never was inside that house in my life, but why were their neighbours so silent? Why was their fame not bruited abroad? Was it that they were too dull to talk about at all? . . . But there are compensations. One day that family inherited half a million, and the many daughters at once selected and married an equivalent number of clergymen.

A day or two after that expedition of mine Maggie Benson wrote to say that Nelly was ill in bed. A few posts later I learned it was diphtheria, and almost immediately came the news that all was over. . . . I remember walking dazed into my mother's room and saying: "Nelly is dead." She put aside her breakfast tray, burst into tears, and held out her arms. . . . Very fond of Nelly, miserable for me, she said first: "Oh poor, poor Mrs. Benson!"

The damp cold of autumn always told upon her, and though this year she had tried hard to make the best of her ailments — which were increasing fast — and as usual cheered up between whiles, it was evident that in the depths of her heart she was very unhappy. The worst thing was the deafness, for though by no means marked, it bred a constant idea that people were slighting her. What with one's helpless pity, and the endeavour to combat this illusion (which mercifully she never entertained with regard to me), life at home became even a greater strain than in the days of perpetual storm. To manage a proud, morbidly sensitive nature like hers, to pilot her through a dinner or tea party without her feeling herself neglected or pained, to do all this in such a way that she, the cleverest of women, should not see it — all this told on one's vital force. My father never noticed these efforts of mine; merely saw that some visitors preferred talking to me rather than to her, and resented it bitterly. Yet I think she understood, for a few months previously she had told Alice she felt more *certain* of my affection for her than that of any of us, except of course Alice; but she never fully realized what a grip she had on the hearts and imaginations of most of her children.

Having suffered such agonizing remorse about my mother, it was the greatest comfort to me only the other day to find the following passage in one of my letters to H. B., written just after her death: "Hardly three weeks ago, Pauline Trevelyan, who has been much here, and was adorable with Mother, suddenly said to me as we were walking across a London square: 'Ethel, you are good to your mother.' Then I knew that she had seen what others did not see, how the whole thing was cutting into my flesh, sapping my strength, making me *have* to be untrue to my music — that she guessed how all my strongest prayers and endeavours were about that. . . .

And when she said those words it touched me so frightfully and I was so grateful that I broke down and wept in the middle of the square!"

One thing had made a very deep impression on Mother, a visit paid with me in September to Lambeth. The incredible loving kindness, the magic intuition of Mrs. Benson, never struck me more forcibly than on that occasion. Knowing all about my home life, she had once said to me: "If ever I can do anything tell me," and I had suggested this visit. That there could be such a person in the world as Mrs. Benson, caught up in a ceaseless round of activities and yet able to give to a stranger what she gave that day, was a revelation to Mother, and I think the tears she shed on that November morning were at least as much for another as for me. She wrote — she told me she could not help writing — to Mrs. Benson, and received in reply surely the most wonderful letter ever penned by bereaved mother. It absolutely awed her to whom it was addressed, and she kept it close at hand, reading it again and again; it must have been near her to the end, and for that reason I have not found it among her cherished papers.

Soon after Nelly's death Mrs. Benson wrote to me: "All is well here; our three sons have been so infinitely beautiful, and have grasped the further communion of death (which you speak of) so wonderfully. 'It is expedient for you that I go away' is a human truth, I verily believe — if there is a line, which I don't think, between human and divine. Only selfishness or dreariness or repining would really separate us. Maggie is wonderful. I could break my heart about her, but loving is better — and God knows, as he does . . . all."

Later on she told me that the only book she read throughout that time, reading it again and again, was *The Prison*, and no tribute that ever reached H. B.'s ears gave him such intense pleasure.

Going through my mother's last letters to me, I was struck with a pang how uncomplainingly she bore what must inevitably have grieved her during the last months of her life, my preoccupation with the Trevelyans — although as regards Pauline she absolutely understood it, being as fond of her as even I could desire. I suppose too it is inevitable that growing spirits should look elsewhere than

to home for nourishment and that every mother must face the fact; but what touches me so deeply is realizing that this mother, whose child's gaze was always fixed elsewhere — always, always, and with such extreme ardour — was facing in at last! . . .

Meanwhile it was my privilege to give her two more great pleasures. That autumn two other works of mine were performed in London, one being the *Overture to Anthony and Cleopatra*; and on this occasion my wonderful father again decided to be present. I did not go back with them to Frimhurst, and next day my mother wrote me the sort of letter a mother would write under the circumstances, adding: "In the train Papa said, 'Well, I thought the music very pretty and listened to it with pleasure'"! Whether she was seriously gratified that this very stormy composition should have produced such a pleasing impression on one who appreciated music mainly as a soporific, or whether the remark amused her as intensely as it did me and was passed on in that spirit, I never learned. Perhaps she guessed that at such moments all tributes, even the most fantastic, are welcome.

It was in the November of this year, soon after Nelly's death, that the first stone was laid at Windsor of my long close friendship with her whose name stands on the dedication leaf of these memoirs — of whom I have so often thought while writing them, smiling as I imagined to myself the caustic comment that would have been lavished here and there. I had occasionally met Betty and Maggie Ponsonby at the Deanery, and had even been introduced a year or two previously at some sports at Aldershot to their mother, who was in attendance on one of the princesses — a short determined-looking figure, the face very striking, the speaking voice and enunciation of an exquisite quality that was to be among other things my enchantment for a quarter of a century. The Empress had said she was considered very "clever" at Court, but Lady Ponsonby always maintained that was because she read the leading articles in the *Times*. It appeared she had not been attracted by her daughters' description of "the Contrapuntalist" as they called me, saying it was bad enough if, like Mary in *Pride and Prejudice*, people were "occupied with the study of human nature and thoroughbass," but counterpoint *doublé* with Fred Archer (this in allusion to my love

of riding) must be still more provoking. On the day I was requested by them to come to Norman Tower she withdrew, therefore, into her sanctuary, the Prisons; but after having been dragged forth by Betty to hear me sing *Come o'er the Sea* the ice was broken, and needless to say she instantly exercised the powerful attraction that even those whom she terrified could not resist. But it was not till some months later, thanks to my forcing her against her will (no mean achievement) to read Anatole France's works, that we really made friends.

It is a grief to me that in these pages I can only record the dawn of what was the longest, happiest, and best proven of all my friendships with women, but the only alliance that transcends it is in the same case. In December came the bend in a lane that seemed to promise no turning, and a correspondence, as between two great friends — the only matter that had been under discussion five years previously — now began between H. B. and myself. Why what once had been impossible now became possible, the striking of what exact hour set me free to leave the desert for ever . . . these are things that cannot be told here; the explanation roots in a silent section of the past. I will only add that from now onwards our friendship became the pivot of my life — as it is today though my friend died ten years ago. All that story falls beyond the term of years set in these memoirs, but what has already been said will explain why I date from December 1890 the beginning of a new life.

H. B., holder of views unworkable in the social scheme as we know it, writer of books which, though full of passages and pages of strange, incorruptible beauty, can only appeal to the few; H. B., able at a touch to ease even a stranger's burden . . . H. B., one of the Wise Men of the World! . . . His life, an uneventful one, will never be written, but some day, through what agency I know not, his letters — letters unlike any others — will surely be edited. And I think, too, that in fullness of time, maybe many, many years hence, someone will stumble across the mine of his thought and work it — perhaps make it accessible to the many . . . in any case bring up rare treasures to the surface. And thus, like Láo Tsze, he may endure

through the ages by virtue of a few fragments that contain the essence of all we know or need to know.¹

We had a very jolly Christmas that year, the Henschels, to whom my mother was much attached, being for the first time our guests; and my father, whose prejudice against artists had long since yielded to the irresistible "good fellow" quality of Henschel, instantly took a great fancy to his wife. By no means addicted to reminiscences as a rule — and his family were far too engrossed in their own concerns, alas! to draw him out — under genial influence such as that of our visitors he sometimes launched forth in astonishing fashion, and one evening related an Indian experience so complete artistically, and of a character so dramatic, that Lili Henschel begged me to write it out for her, as near as possible in his own words; which I did, keeping a copy myself. And I must preface by saying that to draw the long bow was not among his weaknesses.

"Yes, Mrs. Henschel," said my father, "I assure you it astonishes me sometimes to think what a lot of scamps I have had to do with in my time. For instance there was a fellow called Pattle whom I knew very well when I was on the Governor-General's staff — Jim Pattle . . . as big a scamp as ever you saw, and a bad fellow in every way. Behaved very ill to his wife too, but she was devoted to him, and when — well, when anything went wrong, he used to say that it *couldn't be helped now*, and she was quite satisfied and forgave him again and again. Well, at last he drank himself to death, and they found to their astonishment he had left directions that he should be embalmed, and buried next his old mother in the family vault at Marylebone Church. Some of us were a good deal amused at this, but his widow said that it must be done, so they put him in a cask ready to be shipped off to England, and she insisted on having it placed in a spare room next her bedroom till the vessel was ready to carry him off. Well, in the middle of the night there was a loud explosion; she rushed into the room and found the cask had burst — and there was her husband half out

¹ Henry Brewster's published works are: *Theories of Anarchy and Law; The Prison; The Statuette and the Background* (Williams and Norgate); *L'Âme Païenne* (Mercure de France); *Les Naufrageurs; Drame en vers* (Perrin et C^{ie}.).

of it! The shock sent her off her head then and there, poor thing, and she died raving."

Thinking this was the end of the story we broke in with ejaculations, but my father lifted his hand and went on: "All the same his friends thought they'd better carry out his last wishes, so they had him put up again and taken down the Ganges. The sailors hadn't the most distant idea what they'd got on board, and thinking the cask was full of rum, which was the case, they tapped it and got drunk; and, by Jove, the rum ran out and got alight and set the ship on fire! And while they were trying to extinguish the flames she ran on a rock, blew up, and drifted ashore just below Hooghly. And what do you think the sailors said? — that Pattle had been such a scamp that the Devil wouldn't let him go out of India!"

This story had of course an immense success; my father leant back in his chair, a gleam of quiet triumph in his eye, and when we had quite done laughing he added: "The end of it was that a letter came from the rector of Marylebone saying *the Pattles had never had a vault in the church at all.*"

On another occasion, Christmas Eve it was, we were discussing who should drive, who walk, to church next day, and Mrs. Henschel in an access of candour remarked to her neighbour: "I'm going to your church tomorrow, General, but I think I ought to let you know I am a Unitarian." Whereupon, bending forward with the geniality that was so characteristic of him, my father replied in a burst of confidence: "Well, Mrs. Henschel, I've often said, and I daresay they are all tired of hearing me say it, that some of the best fellows I have known in my long life were Mohammedans." And why everybody laughed, more particularly the lady to whom the remark was addressed, he was far too simple to understand.

I have said elsewhere that in later years, whether she liked them or no, resident visitors were seldom a success with my mother, the chief reason being that, owing to that fatal deafness, general conversation escaped her; and as there was always plenty of it across our dinner table, the attention of the guest engaged in a *tête-à-tête* with her would sometimes wander; or perhaps after dinner he would join the younger group with too much eagerness. In short she felt out of it, neglected — as she often put it, a cipher in her own house. Thus all elderly mothers who have not learned certain lessons are

likely to feel as the years roll by. On this particular occasion, however, I was thunderstruck at the way she pulled herself together, at her evident determination not to be a kill-joy, and in writing to Mrs. Benson about it attributed this wonderful change to the obscure working of her influence. But nothing is more common than reaction after a great moral effort, and it was on the following New Year's Day that she suddenly announced, as related elsewhere, that she could not go on living at Frimhurst.

This strange symptom of deep inward distress greatly upset my father; indeed for some time past, though he said little, we knew he was as profoundly troubled about her future as we all were. Presently, though the London idea was given up, she got quite cheerful again, and one day in the first week of January, after going to an afternoon party, she told us, evidently much pleased, that someone had complimented her on looking so well and young. (She was sixty-six, but at times one would not have guessed it.) I have said she had always suffered from an internal weakness; that night she was suddenly seized with what proved to be her last illness and died on January 12, 1891.

Almost all I could bear to say about her end has already been said, but one personal experience connected with her last moment on earth I must add. She had been operated on on the Sunday, and on the Monday was going on well, but the surgeon had warned us there was cause for great anxiety. Towards five o'clock she became terribly restless, and though she presently quieted down and declared she could now get some sleep, we did not like her looks and it was decided to fetch the doctor. The coachman was ill in bed; someone helped me to put one of our irresponsible horses into the two-wheeled cart, and I set forth alone on the five-mile drive to Blackwater. It was a bitter starlit night, the road was in places a sheet of ice, the horse not roughed, and the anguish of being unable to push along fast almost unbearable. . . . Suddenly a faint flash of light shot across the sky and I said to myself: "She is dead." As far as could be calculated it must have been about that moment that her soul passed. . . .

During my youth I had a mania for illuminating texts, and one of these, done specially for her, had been pinned by mother over her bed years and years ago. Once she told me I would hardly be.

lieve how often the sight of those words: "Let not your heart be troubled," had helped her; just before the coffin was nailed down I laid the poor gaudy old scroll across her breast.

After the funeral I told Alice about her wonderful good temper and self-control during Christmas week. From my reports and her own observation she had known that during the whole of the past year there had been a continuous moral effort, which, in spite of occasional relapses, had completely changed the aspect of home life; and we agreed it was as though, having at last really tried to accomplish it, she had been released from a task that was perhaps beyond her strength. For my own part I confess that a deep sense of relief was mingled with my sorrow. And I know it was the same with my father at the bottom of his heart . . . just because he loved her so dearly.

Meditating the events that ended in that nightmare return of mine to England at the close of 1889, I count it is the greatest mercy ever vouchsafed me that we thus were together during the last year of her life. And when I summon up the vision of her seated at her writing-table, eagerly cutting out all the favourable criticisms she could collect of those unripe productions of mine to send to Bob in India, it is good to know she believed, without shadow of doubt, that her faith, or rather her unfailing, most loving sympathy and support, had been justified by the event.



CHAPTER XLV. *Epilogue*

I HAVE now reached Chapter the Last and have only to gather up a few threads concerning those who have figured prominently in my story, beginning with my father.

After my mother's death, perceiving ever more clearly the uniqueness of his personality, my admiration for him increased. Even the fact of not enjoying his unreserved approval was scarcely a subject for regret; one would have hated to see his character and instincts

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weakening. There was a moment when I feared this was happening; namely, when we were allowed to play golf on the home course on Sunday, though lawn tennis had always been forbidden! Later on I came across Dr. Johnson's remark that "relaxation" is permissible on Sunday but not "levity"; "people may walk," he says, "but not throw stones at birds." This cleared the matter up satisfactorily. We had plenty of subjects in common, and as a kindlier and less exacting companion could not have been imagined, we got on excellently, and I had looked forward to our living together at Frimhurst for many years; but he died in 1894.

Those who believe in "judgments," in the nursery sense of the word, might almost think a certain childish folly had been scored up against me, for of the five friends of my youth whose lives were most closely linked to mine — Lisl, Lili Wach, Rhoda, Nellie Benson, and Pauline — two died young, and two on the very threshold of middle life; and of these deaths three were sudden! Even the last to go, Lili Wach, did not live to be an old woman.

Late in 1891 Pauline Trevelyan married a distant cousin of hers, Gilbert Heathcote of the Cameronians. After their marriage they followed the drum, and as I was much abroad and my life very strenuous, Pauline and I did not meet as often as formerly. In 1897, hearing she was ill and that they had taken a house in London so as to be near competent doctors, I went to see her and understood at a glance, though she was perfectly cheerful and full of plans for the future, that there was no hope. A country practitioner had mistaken certain symptoms, galloping consumption set in, and three weeks later she died peacefully. As I said, it was always evident that she was not to be lent to this world for long.

To pass to my German friends; two of these died in the same year as my mother, Consul Limburger and beloved Frau Livia Frege — the latter after a painful illness borne with heroic fortitude and patience. Like my mother she was her best and more than her best self at the last.

Of Lili Wach I saw much in after life on various scattered occasions, but what would have been an enchanting surprise meeting was missed by a hair's breadth. After my mother's death I was much run down and Mary carried me off on a trip to Algiers (where

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I had another severe illness). This was followed by a dreamlike tour along the east coast of the Adriatic in the Empress Eugénie's yacht, but unfortunately both these experiences lie beyond the limit I have set myself. On the way home via Italy we found ourselves as chance would have it at Interlaken, and knowing what such an event would mean for my old friends, apart from the delight of seeing them again myself, I persuaded H.M. to drive up to the Ried. Alas! the family were not expected till the following week, and while I was deliriously shaking hands with the old peasant-in-charge and his daughters, the big dog, reassured as to my respectability, advanced with stiff tail and low growls on the Empress and Count Primoli. The excitement of the family when they heard of this visit, their pride and joy at H.M. having trodden their meadows, their despair at not having been there to do her honour — all these things can be read in a letter from Lili.¹

But another meeting of ours was a great success. In 1892 she came to England and I had the delight of showing her Lambeth and introducing her to Mrs. Benson, whom she had loved and venerated from afar for many years, knowing what a friend she had been to me. The presence of the daughter of Mendelssohn, composer of the *Elijah*, cast a vicarious glamour on Lili's unsympathetic friends, and the Archbishop, who was adorable with her, was more than gracious to me — so much so that Mrs. Benson and I agreed we had better leave it at that and not risk further experiments. The last time I saw Lili was in 1906, when I went to Leipzig for the first production of *The Wreckers*, and not long afterwards, never even having heard she was ill, they wrote to tell me she was dead. . . . Such are the penalties of striking roots in far-off countries.

Wach I met again in comparatively recent years — 1911 I think it was — at a concert in London, on which occasion, called to the platform after the performance of some chamber work of mine, I nearly fell into the stalls with surprise at seeing him and two of the girls sitting in the front row. He had suddenly dashed over to London for some juristical conference, and seeing my name on a poster, like true Germans they all went to the concert. We had a glorious meeting in the tea-room afterwards, and they were amazed to hear my quiet, exceedingly feminine-looking companion was the re-

¹ See p. 496, No. 2; p. 497, No. 3.

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doubtable Mrs. Pankhurst. Needless to say this chance of hurling together new and old friends was taken, and a thrilling conversation, carried on in French, ensued between Wach and Mrs. Pankhurst, in the course of which he told her that he had attended a sitting of the House of Commons the night before, and fancied the Chinese Parliament must be on a higher debating level. I hope he is still alive.

In 1895 the gentle Conrad Fiedler came to a violent and most tragic end. Slightly paralysed in the lower limbs, he was trying to let down the heavy blinds of one of their windows on the second floor, lost his balance, fell, and was killed instantaneously on the pavement below. Not long afterwards Mary married Levi, and after his death (in 1900) Michael Balling, the Bayreuth conductor. They settled in Manchester, where Balling stepped into Richter's shoes, and were there when the German sceptre departed in 1914. I saw her once during their residence in England when he came to London to conduct a beautiful performance of *Orpheus*, on which subject we had a hurried and enthusiastic meeting at the Langham Hotel.

Another sudden death, that of dear old Papa Röntgen, is, on the contrary, one of the most perfect stories I know. The great annual event of his life, as leader of the Gewandhaus orchestra, was playing the violin solo in the Benedictus of the *Missa Solemnis*. He was not a believer, I fancy, but it was even more a religious than a musical event to him, and as he was no longer young — and the music is notoriously very exacting — the nervous strain of the week preceding the performance was always a trial to himself and his family. On the occasion of which I am speaking it appears that he played that unearthly *obbligato* more divinely, with more warmth, nobility, and freedom, than ever before. Those who heard it were amazed, saying to one another that even in the days of his strong-nerved youth he could not have done better. Johanna told me that he went home like a man in a happy dream, and remarked at supper: "For the first time in my life after the Benedictus I can say it — tonight I satisfied myself!" Uttering which words he leant back gently, smiled — and was dead.

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And now there remains but one to be spoken of — the friend who for seven years had been my great joy and who for four times seven was to be my great sorrow. Not that such griefs maintain their keen edge — who could live if that were so? But a tragedy of which the passing years bring no solution is never lived down. Thus I felt when a few months ago, tempted to write these recollections of my life, I found myself about to reopen an old wound.

I have said that during the spiritual crisis spoken of, hatred of Lisl passed away for ever, but I was no nearer understanding what had happened than before. I had to face the fact that my greatest investment in friendship had failed, and banish ghosts as best I could — all the more so since my private life was gradually taking a turn scarcely calculated to lessen the distance between us. By tacit consent Lisl's name dropped out of my correspondence with Lili Wach and Mary Fiedler, was only once mentioned, I think, between me and H. B., and never between me and English friends. It was understood that that chapter was closed, and if I thought of a possible reunion some day, it was vaguely, as one thinks in youth of one's own death. So at least I believed.

In December 1891 H. B. wrote me that his mother-in-law was evidently not long for this world.² I remember thinking of Frau von Stockhausen's celebrated heart complaint — far worse than hers, Lisl had always said — which had caused all doctors to declare she could never live to be an old woman. Calculating her age by her daughter's (Lisl was then forty-one) I came to the conclusion that she must be about eighty, but what of that? Inasmuch as her death would remove the one absolutely unsurmountable barrier between us, she was probably immortal. . . . There is, too, a certain letter of Byron's which begins: "My mother-in-law has been dangerously ill; she is now dangerously well." . . . I pondered these things impersonally, as one might wonder how a tidal wave at Tahiti would affect the beach at Rustington.

Early in January 1892 came further news. My old enemy, having done as much mischief as could reasonably be expected of one individual in a lifetime, had really quitted the earthly scene at last;

² See p. 505, No. 4.

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but before I had even answered the letter³ which gave me these glad tidings, a telegram was put into my hand. The sender may have fancied that I had heard from others what she herself had shrunk from telling me; but doctors are fallible, and no one had cared to speak. Thus it came that without the faintest preparation, without even knowing that she was in other than perfect health, I read the words: "Lisl is dead — Lili."

The letter⁴ that followed this telegram, haunted, so it seems to me, by Lisl's ghost, conveys some idea of the irresistible appeal there was about her, since even one who judged her could mourn her in this fashion. I learned later that an old Leipzig friend of theirs, Helene Hauptmann, who had nursed her through her last illness, was going to live with and keep house for poor Herzogenberg; then the curtain fell, and life went on as before. . . .

And now I realized that, apart from my work, what I had chiefly been living for all these years was to see my lost friend again. There is a sensation of bleeding to death inwardly that has ever since been associated in my mind with no other form of sorrow, however bitter, but only with the flickering out of a secret and passionately cherished hope. . . .

. . . *the night at length when thou,*

O prayer found vain, didst fall from out my prayers.

Later on came the packet of my own letters; this part of our friendship, then, she had not had the heart to destroy. . . . Mercifully I was in the midst of pressing work just then, borne along by something outside myself — as a mother might be by the needs of one of her children. . . .

The years passed, becoming more and more full. I was pushing difficult enterprises, and in possession of the greatest personal happiness that can fall to the lot of any woman. Then came one day a rumour that Herzogenberg's mysterious illness had returned, though not in acute form. He was still carrying on his work at the *Hochschule* with unabated zeal, but his limbs were gradually stiffening. I had always loved him and knew he had been fond of me, but as Lisl's life had doubtless been shortened by the troubles

³ See p. 507, No. 6.

⁴ See p. 499, No. 5.

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our friendship had indirectly begotten, I imagined he might well think of me now with nothing but bitterness. Nevertheless, one spring in the late nineties, some business seeming likely to take me to Berlin, I wrote to Joachim, asking if he thought Herzogenberg would like to see me. If the answer should be "no" it would change nothing — if "yes" it must surely be that he had comfort for me; and presently I got a message that he would be very glad to see me again. Alas! the Berlin plan fell through, and soon after I heard that he had thrown up his post, Berlin being considered the worst possible climate for his malady, and gone, with Helene, to live permanently at the house he and Lisl had built for themselves at Heiden on the Lake of Constance. But for his immobility he was said to be well, cheerful, and musically as productive as ever. For a while it was impossible for me to leave England, but the following winter, which I spent in Rome, I wrote to him again, and it was settled I was to go to Heiden on my way back to England. . . . While I was in Italy the end came suddenly and peacefully.

I remember feeling this was the appointed consummation of an incomprehensible story; apparently I was to go to my grave without the solace, as far as Lisl was concerned, of that strange commerce with the dead that plays so great a part in the lives of some people. Every deepening of life brought, in certain hours, increased nearness with some of these, above all with my mother . . . but between Lisl and me a gulf was fixed that nothing could span. Often and often in the twenty-four years that lay between her death and the outbreak of the war, I have been at or near San Remo, where she lies under cypress trees, and have sometimes wished my feet would take me to that spot . . . but it seemed impossible. Again at Vienna, in 1914, turning over some photographs of modern sculpture, I suddenly came upon something that I laid aside quickly without examining it; it was the portrait-medallion Hildebrand had carved for the headstone of her grave. . . . Thus I thought to feel about her and all that concerns her to the end of my life.

And now comes what is for me the strangest part of our unusual history. Opening that locked door and staring into the darkness behind it, little by little I have come to see light, and as final word

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of my story can say what I never thought to say in this world — that her death has lost its sting for me . . . at last I understand.

This is how I see our story now. Commanded by her mother to choose between us, I cannot doubt that, under the psychological necessity I spoke of, she at first threw me overboard not only actually but in a certain sense morally. In one of her early letters is a confession that now seems pregnant: "I fear I rather lose the feeling of people when they are far away." Perhaps this helped her to let go of me. Though I do not believe the faithless mood lasted long, it lasted long enough, combined with the frenzied activities of her relations and friends, to precipitate for the time being the catastrophe they all wished to avoid; after that there was no deflecting from the line taken.

Perhaps she had no wish to deflect; "Action must be simple," she once said, "in order to be intelligible"; but supposing it were otherwise, and that she had determined to convey to me some indirect assurance of unchanged faith and affection, her great integrity would have forced her to make confession to those whose will was her law. And if the terrible scenes which would have followed were more than she could face, it is not for people the valves of whose hearts are sound to judge her harshly. — Alas! in those days I knew nothing about heart disease and had always found her dread of conflicts rather absurd. . . .

I am not trying to force the case in her favour. The instinct to belittle someone you have loved, in order to find strength to uproot that person from your life, is a mean cowardly instinct it is impossible to defend. On the other hand, given Austrian family traditions, it was as natural to her to divest herself of all responsibility towards me at their command as it seemed — and still seems — monstrous to me. And once she saw her duty, consequences were not her business; the city, given over to fire and brimstone, must perish — the divine command was . . . not to look back.

But where I did her grievous injustice — how this was borne in upon me when for the first time since youth was left behind me I re-read her letters! — was in believing that because she made no sign our parting caused her little or no suffering. It would be impossible to reproduce those letters as they stand. Even in the language better fitted than any I know to convey multiple shades of emotion with-

out falling into sentimentality, one could neither lay bare nor inflict upon others this tenderness lavished on one whom she looked on as her own child, this constant, touching dread lest essentials should be neglected in what seemed to her a fantastic progress through an eternal transformation scene. But one thing is certain; all this is not mere froth and foam on a picturesque but shallow stream; a deep nature is involved.

It certainly was not an easy one to read. For instance, among her gifts was a rare intellectual imaginativeness, traces of which can be found in my poor translations of her letters — witness that phrase about the Brahms theme which reminded her of a giant holding his breath for fear of waking a sleeping child. Yet imagination of the heart she had none; and as, but for her unsatisfied mother-instinct, she had never known sorrow, many things were hidden from her. In reality it was a stiff nature undeveloped by life, yet bafflingly suppld and disguised on the surface by a voluptuous ease of moods and rhetoric — a combination which accounted for the abrupt, cruel transition from midsummer to winter. When all was well between us it was natural to her to give an almost bewilderingly rich, tender form to affection; but the rock below, the possibility of seeing in one thing — and one only — her duty, the consequent ruthless sacrifice of all the rest, in a word the nameless something that chilled her music for me . . . this was equally Lisl. The one element that fuses all other elements was denied her, and perhaps only passionate temperaments can stand erect in elemental storms. When Conrad Fiedler said she was deficient in depth of feeling, possibly this is what he meant, but I think that with these letters before him he would have put it differently.

I think, too, Lili Wach was right in saying as she once did, that Lisl's was a too "simple" affection, a mere matter of personal inclination, lacking the subtle, tenacious web of moral issues that is woven unconsciously into all perfect relations. But Lili never wearied in trying to persuade me that, be that as it might, she suffered cruelly. And it was *I* who refused to believe this, I who alone among all her friends knew of her ever-recurring grief at her childlessness, who admired her effort to accept the inevitable cheerfully and hide her pain in the depths of her heart! In one of her letters ⁵ she once

⁵ Sec p. 222, No. 5.

Impressions that Remained

spoke of this attitude towards harsh necessity as part of human dignity; if such was her instinct where no loyalty to others was involved, how much more in this case! . . . It is hard for people who are apt to translate feeling into action to admit any other test of sincerity; but — there are other tests, and today it is I who am crying into the void: "*Credo, credo in te!*" . . .

One more thing became clear to me as I re-travelled our road. It looks as if those at whose demand she cancelled her past accepted the sacrifice with something very like indifference — perhaps, who knows? with a touch of a still colder feeling. From a letter written after her death by H. B.⁶ it is evident that the devoted couple were Julia and her mother, Lisl being relatively of little account; if so, what pain for her! In this light one phrase in her final letter to me acquires a pathetic significance: "Heinrich, the only being I possess in this world!" . . . Meanwhile neither she nor her doctors saw any reason why she should not live to be an old woman. We were both young, and some day, in the natural course of things, "the blind, passionate will that stood between us would disappear. And so she made no plans, but lived, as was her wont, in the present, till the day death fell upon her unawares.

Such I believe is the explanation of what has been for the greater part of my life a tragic inexplicable mystery. And as I lay down my pen it is stranger than any dream to find that the ice-bound years have melted, that there is still a debt to be paid — a debt which, across the faint line that divides the living from the dead, I can go on paying to the end.

October 1918

⁶ See p. 508, No. 8.

APPENDIX VI

[A]

From Tchaikovsky

London: April 11, 1889.

Chère, bonne, et très respectée Miss Smyth, — Je voudrais bien profiter de votre si aimable invitation, mais, chère Mademoiselle, je pars demain Vendredi à 8h. 20m., et il m'est tout à fait impossible de venir vous trouver chez vous. Espérons que j'aurai plus de chance la fois prochaine quand je viendrai à Londres. Quoique, à vrai dire, je doute fort que je reviendrai, vu qu'il n'y a pas moyen de faire bien les choses quand on n'a que deux répétitions, et quand le chef d'orchestre a à peine le temps de faire son devoir pour les autres morceaux du programme! . . . Enfin, espérons que je reviendrai, et alors mon plus cher vœu sera celui d'aller vous trouver chez vous. Je pars demain pour Marseille, où je prends le bateau à vapeur qui va directement au Caucase; ce sera une traversée de 15 jours!!

Il y a un mois j'ai vu M. Brodsky et sa chère femme, et cela va sans dire nous avons beaucoup parlé de vous. A Homburg j'ai passé une journée entière avec *votre Idole* . . . JOHANNES BRAHMS!!! Il a été charmant pour moi. C'est un homme bien sympathique, quoique mon appréciation de son talent ne corresponde pas à la vôtre. . . .

Au revoir, chère Mademoiselle; j'espère que vous avez composé de bien belles choses, et je vous souhaite tout espèce de prospérité.

P. TCHAIKOVSKY

J'espère que votre *cher chien* va bien!!

[B]

From My Mother

(1)

[*During the Paris Exhibition*]

Frimhurst: October 15, 1889.

My darling, — What a dear you were to make time to send me those cards and almost a letter, in the midst of all that going and

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doing in Paris, and it is too sweet and dear of you to devote part of that rarity, a presented fiver, to get me "a little something." I only hope it will be a very *little* something; however, big or little, I shall receive it with unmixed pleasure, for I do love a remembrance from one I love, and am afraid with me it is even more blessed to receive than to give a "little nonsense" of the sort I hope yours is to me. I only trust Nina has not lost it on the way. . . .

The letting of this land is at a standstill, as Walter B. came to look at it without telling us and went round the place with *Allen*, who is in dire terror of losing his comfortable berth with coals, milk, eggs, chickens, rabbits, and vegetables for his family, and who of course gave the worst account of all the produce! However I am going to see Mrs. B. to-day and will report progress. Herbert too is going over the place and we'll see what *he* says. . . . He seems to have loved the trip to Paris; no one knows what I would have given to be with you! . . .

I went up yesterday to the oculist and lunched with E. There I met that odious W. S., whose one good point in my eyes is having married me to Papa! How I miss you and Marco no words can say. God bless you my own darling Phoenix.

Your ever devoted Mother and Admirer,

NINA SMYTH

P.S. — I looked in for a moment at St. James's Hall; how well that Borwick bangs about!

(2)

[Written to Nettlecombe]

Autumn, 1890.

My darling, — I must send you a return line to tell you I don't know which delighted me more, your interesting letter, or to hear you are really coming back on the 6th. I have so wanted you for the last few weeks but have never said anything about it as I did not like to interfere with your work or your pleasures. But I am better now since that dear child Nina has taken L. and the fascinating B. off my hands! I was afraid they were bored and tormented myself so that I really couldn't sleep at night. And then a

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disappointment with the cook, etc., etc. — stupid things to make one actually ill, but I suppose I am become nervous, and a nuisance to myself and everyone else in consequence. . . .

How kind of dear Lady Trevelyan! and how I should enjoy all the delights of art and nature at Nettlecombe . . . but I am only fit for home. Give her my kindest regards and very warm thanks for proposing it.

Your devoted, truly loving
MOTHER

[C]

From Sir Arthur Sullivan

(1)

Grove House, Weybridge: June 14, 1890.

Dear Miss Smyth, — *Me voilà*. In the same house I occupied last year. Not very far from you, only two stations. When you want some tea come and have it with me; I generally strike work about 5. Had I not been ill and in pain on that eventful Saturday¹ I should have been a gratified witness of your success. I had made all arrangements to go but I had a combined attack that day, my old physical trouble and . . . Gilbert! Nevertheless I was really pleased to read such nice things about the work of the *gracieuse jeune fille*, and I hope that you are beginning a brilliant and dignified musical career.

Ever yours sincerely,
ARTHUR SULLIVAN

(2)

Etablissement Contrexéville: Aug. 10, 1891.

Dear Miss Smyth, — In answer to your questions:

(1) I am not in London, and consequently

(2) You cannot find me any morning.

But if you pack up a small portmanteau at once and jump into the next train leaving for Paris you will be here 21 hours afterwards, and I need not tell you how really delighted I shall be to see you. There is a constant delirious whirl of dullness here, the counter-

¹ The performance of my *Serenade* at the Crystal Palace.

Impressions that Remained

part of which is only to be found in England at a Young Men's Christian Association Weekly Evening Recreation. I am up at 6, am *massé'd* and douched, and drink 6 pints of the mineral water, walking all the time until breakfast at 10. Nothing more to eat or drink till 6 when we dine — then to bed at 10, to resume the same existence at 6 next morning. I need scarcely tell you that the two meals are the two great events of the day. . . .

I still want a house in your neighbourhood and am likely to want it, as I shall never get one to satisfy me. I want one unfurnished, so that I may always have it to myself, to live there when I like. What has become of you that you have never given me a sign of life for so long? Absorbed in some great work I suppose. May an old man's blessing rest on you.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR SULLIVAN

(3)

[NOTE. — *I had told Sir Arthur of a friend of ours who had five daughters and wanted to let his house, Fernhill near Camberley.*]

Contrexéville: Aug. 16, 1891.

Dear Miss Smythe (oh that accursed "c" will slip in!). — Your parable of "a certain man had five daughters" would do admirably for one of the Three Choirs Festivals; you might do it. I can't because it begins like "The Prodigal Son."

Fernhill I believe to be the very house I have always longed for. It is near Minley, isn't it, and standing on a hill facing towards Cove? Oh dear how odd it would be if I went to live there — having longed for that house ever since I was a "little human boy." Can you and will you find out some particulars for me, such as rent, or price (if to buy), size of house, number of rooms, garden and extent of grounds etc.? Do, there's a dear (young lady I must add for *les convenances*) and write to me addressed to Queen's Mansions — only put "private to be forwarded." I will come down and see you and the house directly I return to England. . . .

Everyone seems to get well here but myself — it is most "aggravating" with as many "g's" as you like.² If you see the Empress will

² This was a word I never could spell.

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you convey to her my most respectful devotion — will you also let me say in all earnestness how grieved I was to learn (from your letter) of the loss you suffered in January. It was the first I heard of it. I lost my own dear mother not so very long ago, and therefore it is needless to say how very deeply I feel for you.

Ever yours sincerely,

ARTHUR SULLIVAN

(4)

Contrexéville, Thursday Night: Aug. 20, 1891.

Dear Miss Smyth, — You are an angel, and what a house agent you would make! I can't conceive a house ever remaining unlet if placed in your hands to describe.

My mouth waters at your description of Fernhill. It is just what I want and if I were in England I would come down by the next train to see it, but alas! I am here and although I am leaving at 8.50 to-morrow morning I am not coming home yet, as I want to get a fortnight's mountain air first. I am alarmed at the prospect of someone stepping in before me. Do you think you could induce Mr. Burnett to delay any negotiations with others until my return? It would not make very much difference to him and it *might* (I say it *might*) be of great consequence to me. Use your most diplomatic power, charm him with your manner and your music. I should at all events like to look at the place before others bar the way. If you write to me on Saturday (how coolly I presume on your good nature!) address to me

Hôtel de l'Europe,

Aix les Bains,

after that to Queen's Mansions (to be forwarded) as my movements are uncertain — Good-night.

Ever yours sincerely,

ARTHUR SULLIVAN

P.S. — Having written this on Thursday so as to catch the post out, I put it carefully away in my pocket to take to the post and have kept it carefully in my pocket ever since. It is now hardly necessary to ask you *not* to write to me yesterday. It is pouring in

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that dismal hopeless fashion that is peculiar to Alpine or other mountain valleys. Please address to Queen's Mansions if you write.



I said *five* daughters, not *fine*.

(5)

1 Queen's Mansions: September 27, 1891.

Dear Miss Smyth, — No — I do not misunderstand you nor think you spoke foolishly. If you do not appreciate what you have done well and know that it is good, you cannot properly criticize your weak points. You must give me a few days before I look carefully at your Mass as I am going out of town on Tuesday till Friday.

I am at a standstill about Fernhill. I do not know Mr. Randall, his name, address, nor anything that is his. And I don't like to ask Mr. Burnett to assist me in turning himself out of his house. I am also shy of writing to Mrs. Hippisley, who although she is your sister, may not regard me with the same lenient indulgence. I must wait till you come back, unless *you* would ask Mrs. Hippisley to go and beard the Randall in his den. This is my 23rd letter; my secretary (Smythe with an "e") is away so I will finish.

Ever yours sincerely,

ARTHUR SULLIVAN

(6)

[NOTE. — *This letter, written to me while I was staying at Cap Martin, is of later years, but I include it because of the reference to Fernhill, which by that time he had forgotten the name of!*]

1 Queen's Mansions: May 1, 1895.

My dear Ethel, — Surely Ethel must mean in old Saxon "faithless." I must look it up in Skeat. It was a grave disappointment to me not to see you last week for (I cannot explain why) I had a great longing to see you again — the longing one has to revisit a place where one has been very happy as a child. Although I am old enough to be your father you are connected in my mind with my childhood's days. I suppose it is because we visited all my old haunts

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together — Frimley, York Town, even Cove! I wish I could have had that place we lunched at together; I forget the name of the house and its possessor but it was such a nice, comfortable house and had such a splendid view. The only drawback was the nunnery or monastery at the gates.

Well, as Dick Swiveller would say, "I never loved a dear gazelle but what it was sure to spend the Spring at Cap Martin." Let me know when you return and I will come over from my château at Walton to One Oak and see you — and your score. In the meantime believe that I have a true affection for you and the keenest interest in your work. Please give my humble duty to Her Majesty to whom I am devoted.

Ever yours sincerely,

ARTHUR SULLIVAN

[D]

From Frau Lili Wach

[Translations]

(1)

[After My Mother's Death]

Leipzig: February 6, 1891.

Dearest Ethel, — Last night my husband met Frau Consul Limburger at a party and learned the great loss you have sustained, that your beloved mother is dead, and I write at once to tell you how deeply I sympathize with you. I know how you loved and appreciated her, and freely confess that in days when I almost despaired of you, two redeeming features always appealed to me and warmed my heart towards you — the way you held aloft your relation to your mother and . . . your veneration for the Bible! In these two things I see comfort for you now. In spite of your being far from her, in spite of your development in foreign countries — possibly in directions that lay outside her path — you always clung faithfully and warmly to her and what she was to you; and it is good for those who love you to know you have the consolation of thinking how much joy and satisfaction you were able to give her in the last year of her life.

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The letter in which you spoke of Mrs. Benson's wonderful resignation when her daughter died, and her close touch with things unseen, gives me confidence that you yourself will not let go the feeling that your path is directed by a guiding hand, hard though the ways have been through which it has led you. Do you remember how I always persisted in taking the sentence engraved in the bangle you gave me as a prophetic utterance for yourself "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother"? — yes — closer even than a mother, and that support will not fail you. Adolf, the children, and Fräulein Jung all send you messages of sympathy, and I am, in faithful love,

Your

LIII

(2)

[After the Empress Eugénie's visit to the Ried]

Ried: June 21, 1891.

My dearest Ethel, — You cannot imagine-how your fairy-tale apparition here in the rôle of *demoiselle d'honneur* to such an interesting historical personage thrilled and amused the whole family; and how the unsuspecting Ulli³ and his daughters are being cross-questioned! It was dear, faithful, and like you to take the old road up here in your new incarnation and you would hardly believe how it delighted Adolf. But I think it must have given you pleasure to see once more the quiet spot from which you went forth into the world to meet with such overwhelming adventures. I can see you now, arriving on that first visit to the Ried in a rough frieze dress and a mannish-looking hat, with only one idea in your head — Italy! And now you come back, a much travelled lady, a composer whose works are seeing the light of day . . . friends — ah! I wonder how many? — and above all the Friend that never fails. I love to think of you thus — in spite of the magic-lantern changes of your life with a security which for many years you believed to be unattainable. What happier thought can there be for those who love you?

This was the part of your letter that arrested me most, but husband and children were wholly taken up with the thought that the Empress Eugénie has actually walked our meadows, and alas! that

³ The peasant in charge at the Ried.

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Leo (isn't he a Marco on a bigger scale?), whose temper has been severely tried, first by a bitter winter and now by a plague of insects, welcomed her with growls! Oh that we had been here! yet how strange it would have been meeting you again in the company of an Empress *incognita* and an Italian cavalier! Mucki, who has lately been plunged in Napoleonic memoirs, is frantic at having missed H. M. and implores you if possible to beg her autograph for the Visitors' Book, also that of "the gentleman with the top hat." When I asked Ulli how you looked, he said: "as young as nine years ago but still slimmer!" (this last I put down to a well-cut travelling costume). . . . When you can, write to Frau Livia; it gives her so much pleasure. She was rather depressed last time I saw her, having been ill for some time, but when I read her passages in your letter, those young blue eyes of hers lit up with amusement and warmth. So write to her and rejoice her heart . . . as you know how to! There is a sad old song of ours:

*O love as long as you can,
O love as long as you may,
There will come a time, there will come a time,
When weeping you stand by graves!*

I won't end on this note, but with a special greeting from our baby girl, who has an odd passion for your really not flattering bicycle portrait, and is for ever saying "*Mein lieb Mammali, zeig mal Ada Wach* (for thus she styles herself) *die Ethel im Rosenlaube*" (Dear little Mama, show Ada Wach Ethel in the rose-arbour).

So farewell, my dearest, and remember now and again that no one is fonder of thee than

THY OLD LILI

(3)

[*After Frau Livia Frege's Death*]

Ried: October 4, 1891.

Dearest Ethel, — How like human nature that I rushed into the children's room the moment your last letter with the autographs came, and then let two months elapse before writing to thank you for them! How kind it was of you — but you always were dear and

Impressions that Remained

good to "the many children," who were beside themselves with delight. The precious bit of paper has been stuck into the book, and also, as historical evidence, your letter describing the great event. And on the opposite page, Leo's interview with the Empress — the supreme moment of his life of course — has been sketched by Mirzl! All the children once more send grateful messages, accompanied by a chorus of recollections concerning various scenes in which you and they took part. . . .

Ah! how times change! When we go back to Leipzig on the 20th, what will it be like without Livia Frege? You had heard of course of her long illness, endured with splendid fortitude and the greatest sweetness and patience, and of her end in that gloomy town-house of theirs; — in the summer too, when hardly a friend or acquaintance was there to attend the funeral! . . . It was strange getting this news in a polite communication from her son and daughter-in-law! . . . One of the last times I saw her — she was well then, looking magnificent in her mourning, and so young — she spoke of you with warm affection, and had that characteristic radiant look on her face that you loved so. There was much ardour and charm about her, and a big, noble, genuine line such as is rarely met with nowadays . . . "*Und mir war sie mehr.*"⁴

Tell me how your Mass is progressing. What you said about Herzogenberg gave me much pleasure; I can imagine that now, when you are beginning to see the fruit of your labours, you must often think of what you owe to his subtle gift for teaching.

Adolf, who sends you his love, has had a wretched summer. He sprained his knee on his very first excursion (the Titlis) and has been lame ever since and plunged in despair — just like you on a similar occasion. Meanwhile my nephew from Carlsruhe came to stay, got typhus fever, and gave it to his mother and cousins — no joke up in the mountains and not an ideal summer holidays for any of us! But when it is over you are conscious of a sort of gratitude for trials overcome that is a sounder feeling than anything you can get out of easy days. Farewell, and think of me when things are well with thee — for that is the great wish of

THY FAITHFUL LILI

⁴ "And more than all this she was to me"; referring to Livia's friendship with Mendelssohn.

In the Desert

(4)

[*After Consul Limburger's Death*]

Leipzig: Winter, 1891.

. . . What you write about Consul Limberger I well understand. In spite of lack of sympathy between us I was not blind to the social talent that was so greatly appreciated here; but above all I am sorry for her, for whom on the contrary I have always had sympathy and who as you know has had a good deal of trouble in late years. Since you left Leipzig, strange to say I was for ever finding myself beside him in the world, and on such occasions always thought of you and what a good friend he had been to you. And that reflection induced a less critical attitude towards his remarks! Many and many a time last winter we sat lovingly side by side at the Tauchnitzes', the Freges', in the Gewandhaus, and elsewhere, and then suddenly I would see a vision of you — a look of surprise and amusement on your face! You can imagine better than anyone how my heart aches at the sight of that shut-up, forlorn old house opposite,⁵ all the more since the present generation does not exactly carry on the tradition!

(5)

[*After Lisl's Death*]

Leipzig: January 23, 1892.

My poor dear Ethel, — How I have kept you waiting for the news you must be longing for! But we ourselves were in the same case; only by degrees have we been able to collect and piece together different impressions of different people so as to arrive even at bare facts. As to what you and I care for most, her state of mind in these latter days, a chance word or reference to the past that might give a clue to such as can read between the lines — on these points it is impossible to gather anything. I only know Fräulein Hauptmann⁶ very slightly; the little she wrote to Frau von Holstein and Line Trebst deals only with exterior facts, and one cannot worry the poor husband with letters, touching as were his two to Adolf — so

⁵ Frau Frege's house.

⁶ The old Leipzig friend who helped to nurse Lisl during her last illness, and after her death went to live with Herzogenberg at Berlin.

Impressions that Remained

utterly characteristic of his unselfishness, his depth of nature, his courage and bigness of soul. At present, he writes, it is as though he were merely separated from her in some inexplicable way for the time being, but that it would be unworthy of her to let bitterness or despair overwhelm him at the thought of the lonely life which will now be his to the end.

From a letter to Heubner it is evident that he only realized the imminence of death when she was actually dying, and that neither he nor the doctor anticipated such a rapid dissolution. As you knew about the death of Frau von Stockhausen when you wrote, perhaps you may have learned from the same source what a terrible complication and anxiety it was for them having to prepare Lisl gradually for her mother's end. This had of course a bad effect on her condition and as it turned out was unnecessary, for she never learned in this world that her mother was dead.

As for my own impressions, all I can tell you is that I saw her eight months ago — that is, in May last year — when, after a long spell of bad health in Berlin, she came here for the second performance of his *Requiem* in the Thomas Kirche. In some respects I thought her changed, shorter of breath and thinner; her eyes had a tired look and she was inclined to become agitated when there was too much movement round about her. But in between whiles she was as full of life, as young, even as childlike in appearance as in the old Humboldtstrasse days. Thus I found her the morning I took my youngest to see her at old Frau von Holstein's, for she was not allowed to climb our stairs. She was standing in the corner bay-window, looking out; in her hand a comb, and two streams of hair flowing over her dressing-jacket. I shall never, never forget the transition from shyness to wondering confidence on the face of the child as he looked up at her, and she looked down, so eagerly and tenderly, at him. . . .

That evening in the church she sat opposite the pulpit with her aunt Frau von Wüllerstorff . . . and Frau X, who needless to say had contrived to tack herself on to them. Unfortunately I was far away, right up near the altar, but she sent messengers to fetch the three girls in succession, and after it was over, when all the old friends came crowding round, she looked wonderfully well, full of animation and joyous excitement. In fact she protested indignantly

when my husband carried her off by force and escorted her back in a cab to Frau von Holstein's, where he made her promise to lie down at once.

I did not see her again till next morning at the station. As "Tante Léonie" was with her, one felt it would not be advisable to linger, and time was short. Very pale, moving with difficulty (it was a great effort to her getting into the railway carriage), wrapped in a grey dust cloak, a black lace veil over her face — thus it was I saw her last, and parted from her without any sort of presentiment, counting on many future meetings, whether in Switzerland, Berlin, here, or at Nauheim. She was going to Nauheim almost at once and it appears to have suited her admirably — so at least she wrote me in August, for a long time had elapsed since I had had news of her. In memory of her subsequent complete recovery at Heiden (where her mother had been with them and feeling particularly well) she had decided to build a little double house there, in order to be together in the summer.

By the time my congratulations on this excellent plan reached her, it had already, so she wrote, become dubious. On her way back to Berlin, as she then thought, she met Mrs. Brewster and the children — whether in Zurich or Geneva I am not certain — travelled thence to Munich, where I fancy her mother was, and there became so seriously ill that the doctors urgently advised giving up Berlin and taking her to the South. It appears there were grave symptoms of kidney disease and Doctor Schmidt did not believe she would ever come back from Italy; but this I only learned from Hugo, who is studying at Munich and who saw and spoke to her for quite an hour at the Fiedlers' on November 9, the day before they left for San Remo. The boy said he had heard that this was the opinion of the doctors; but as at the same time he told us how full of life she seemed, how young as to ways and appearance, I didn't believe it.

Then, quite at the end of December, came short bad reports from Helene Hauptmann; she had been sleeping very badly, had next to no appetite, was very restless, and her feet were swelling. But in the same letter she added that having had two good nights the patient was wonderfully better, had greatly enjoyed some food prepared by an Austrian cook, and was continually talking with

Impressions that Remained

greatest delight about her summer plans in Heiden (it appears she did so on the very morning of her death). Thus it seemed impossible to believe the worst. In this letter of December 29, Fräulein Hauptmann begged me in Lisl's name to write out for her the words of my father's song *Fern und Ferner*,⁷ the melody of which was constantly haunting her. I wrote them out at once, answering too a number of little questions on trivial matters, but my heart contracted when I remembered for how long a time there had only been this indirect kind of intercourse between us. "Can it be as serious as all that?" one asked oneself — and yet could not realize it.

Throughout all these later years, when for one reason or another our rare meetings always seemed fated to be either cruelly curtailed or postponed, I had hoped, longed for, counted on a *Wiedersehen* that should be neither interrupted nor cut short — a real good long talk and mutual explanation. And now here I am, without even a word of farewell — in possession of not one deeper thought of hers — having received no message of affection. . . . Everything I hoped for, for you and myself, has perished miserably in the silence she has taken with her to the grave — a grave under beautiful old cypress trees at San Remo. It is bitter and seems incomprehensible, one of the many tragedies of life against which it is useless to rebel.

I want to know how it is with you, what is preoccupying you chiefly just now. To send you nothing but these few superficial indications cuts me to the heart, but it is all I have for you. I myself am suddenly and utterly bankrupt as regards my fondest hopes and feel very old and lonely. Perhaps I shall see you again in England, where it is not impossible I may be going for ten days or a fortnight in order to be with my sister; and if so we'll meet somewhere "for the sake of auld lang syne," won't we?

Till then God be with thee and bring thee much good.

Thy

LILI

⁷ <i>Fern und ferner verhallet der Reigen.</i>	Far and farther — the music dies away.
<i>Wohl mir, um mich her ist Schweigen Auf der Flur:</i>	Blessed silence has fallen On the plain:
<i>Dem bangen Herzen nur</i>	Only from my troubled heart
<i>Will nicht Ruh' sich neigen. . . .</i>	Does quiet hold aloof. . . .

In the Desert

[E]

From Henry Brewster ("H. B.")

(1)

[After My Mother's Death]

January 14, 1891.

It grieves me not to be able to see you and to think how bereaved you must feel at moments. All I know of her is that she was your mother and loved you. That suffices. It is a cruel wrench at first — and the death bed gives the lie so directly to all our conventions! Perhaps you have never been before at that hour with one dear to you. A little later on — I tell you how it is with me at least — there is something noble in sorrow if one does not spoil it by trying to make it continuous; it is intermittent, and the fresher we are for other feelings, the fresher too for it. . . . I *do* regret not seeing you.

Yours

H.

(2)

January 16, 1891.

. . . Have I ever told you about my father's death? I was with him alone at Versailles, and our house, like all the others, was full of Prussians; 16 officers, 40 soldiers, and 20 horses. My mother and the rest of them had been sent off to England with the jewelry and the moneybag (not so needless a precaution as your German friends would tell you; I saw a good many houses sacked; what is perfectly true is that the soldiers never did it without orders from their officers). Nothing could induce my father to leave his house, so I had to stay with him and take care of him; he was seventy-one, and gouty, and hot-tempered, and he treated the Prussian officers outrageously. My time was spent in explaining "spread eagle, and the land of the free and the home of the brave" to them, and soothing their feelings; they were on the point of arresting him time and again. But all the while I was burning inwardly with a sort of shame-fever at not being able to join my old schoolmates and enlist in the *franc-tireurs*. Often that seemed to me the higher duty; the commonwealth before the family. Then death came and struck my old

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father down and there was no one but me to hold his hand. That settled my opinion for life: first think of persons and then of ideas if you have leisure; ideas can wait. I don't know why I am telling you this. I wish so I could do something for you. . . .

(3)

January 20, 1891.

. . . I knew there was some trouble about your mother, but did not know it was so bad. I am glad you have told me; when things are mixed up in that way one has to be brutally sincere to have any genuine feeling at all, and one's sorrow is only true if one recognises honestly the relief. They go quite well together; they don't agree on the stage but they do in life. The sorrow is for the beautiful traits that were there, and the unswerving affection, and for all that one owes, and for the terrible nearness that nothing can obliterate; and the relief is for something alien, hopelessly intertwined with all this, and which may drive us to the verge of despair or of madness. Think of it and you will find that there are harder cases than yours was, or at least more cruelly complicated ones. But I realise what you had to bear and am glad you bore it.

When you have got through your proof-correcting you must take your philosophical autobiography out of the nutshell into which you have packed it so tightly that I don't exactly know how to spread it out correctly. [N.B. — I had written: "I agree with you about people coming before ideas. But sometimes the idea represents a person, viz. yourself! And while you are apparently fighting for principle it is really your own life you are fighting for. Please mark this profound statement for it is my own philosophical autobiography in a nutshell."] Of course there are cases in which ideas — if one can call them so — must take precedence over persons; for instance in the case of a vocation. The vocation, as you say, really is a person, viz. the one who is called on to renounce it and who must not. But if it is only a question of the greater or lesser difficulties under which the vocation can be pursued — as for example a musician's career in an unmusical country or a thinker's work in the midst of a hostile community, *e.g.* Voltaire in New England — well, then I am inclined to think the world only needs the work of those who can work under difficulties; and persons must resume

their precedence over ideas. The moral effort somehow tells on the quality of the work; not directly of course but in a roundabout way, as gymnastics might. You found it so yourself. This runs into the old question of morality and art which can be answered in a breath. A poet who can write better verses with the help of gin (like Byron?) had better remain sober and do as well as he can in that state. But if he cannot do anything at all in that state let him get drunk like Musset; it is part of his vocation and not a mere help to it; and he is not shirking difficulties, he is struggling with death all the time. The wrong thing is to shirk difficulties, and it is only because they generally present themselves under the form of persons that I say, first consider persons and then ideas. Do you agree? The man whose work is not wanted is the one who makes it easier for himself at any cost. That settles him.

Yesterday evening I went to see *Much Ado about Nothing* at the Lyceum, with our friend Irving as Benedict and the voiceless but genial Terry as Beatrix. Is the play supposed to be a genuine work of Shakespeare's? I can hardly believe it; he may have arranged it a little, but it is a weak and silly thing. They all try to be witty the whole time in the most selfconscious manner, and don't succeed once even by chance. When I came out I thought I should never smile again. But I shall.

Tell me more when you have time to stretch and breathe.

H.

(4)

Dresden: December 14, 1891.

. . . Frau von Stockhausen is better, but getting near the end of her lease. I have forgiven her long ago, as one forgives people who have never in their life known what they were doing or where they were going but who glitter like beautiful fishes. I am acting very dutifully by her, taking her down to Florence, etc. We are on the best of terms and she is persuaded I am the devil; tells everybody so. . . .

Thank you for your letter.⁸ Believe me it is not the author but the friend who is pleased though he only comes in under cover of the other. I find (don't you?) that after the first fortnight or so an

⁸ I had been angry with him, but had got over my anger re-reading *The Prison*.

Impressions that Remained

author doesn't much care about his work, *quâ* author. It is cut off from his flesh and has gone forth on its own account. "Dieu te mène à ton adresse!" said Musset. . . .

(5)

Rome: Christmas Eve, 1891.

. . . We dined with the Fiedlers the other day in Munich. She has a very pretty expression of countenance, something brave and nice in the eyes that is quite an invention.⁹ He seemed to me to be looking younger than in former days; perhaps that is because he is not writing anything just now. I told him his book on the artistic *Thätigkeit*¹⁰ ought to be translated into English to counteract some of Ruskin's poison. But would the English read it? I wish you could have heard Henry James's lamentations over the British brain the other day in the Dresden Gallery. Of course only as regards things intellectual, otherwise it is a powerful instrument. So don't be offended. What made it so very comic is that he doesn't like the Germans — is affronted at their meals and the hours of their meals, their beds and their bedclothes; and their stoves, and their sausages, and their faces and their beer; so that their power of following ideas, which he was comparing with amazement to English incapacity, seemed to come in as an extra grievance against them — a way of adding insult to injury. . . .

I am glad you have a Latin friend at last. It is an utterly unknown race in Gothdom, whether English or German, as I am sure you will find out in a few years — as unknown as the Chinese, and as remote. I am never weary of watching them and am always discovering things I had not suspected; especially in the French who are the strangest of the lot and the hardest to read. . . .

. . . I am alone here; the others are in Florence till I have chosen a dwelling. Looking at miles of painting and statuary I ask myself why all this labour, unless the good people enjoyed it? As soon as one fancies them having toiled with love and got up cheerfully in the morning for the day's work, their pictures and their statues become quite pleasant to look at; but if they were simply struggling to do something remarkable they might just as profitably for them-

⁹ Used in the sense of "trouvaille."

¹⁰ The function of art.

In the Desert

selves and for us have walked the treadmill. I think most reputations seem stolen after a while because they were not earned with enough joy. . . .

(6)

[*After Frau von Stockhausen's Death*]

Rome: January 4, 1892.

You must have been puzzled by my telegram a few days since. I was called suddenly to Florence on account of my mother-in-law's death. I think I had told you she was with Julia in the Via de' Bardi. It is extraordinary how many things there are to be done when a relative dies, especially when the coffin is taken to a foreign land, and I have given up going to Paris or London this month in favour of April. I could not go far away just now. Stockhausen and his son are in Florence; meanwhile I am getting things ready in the apartment I have taken here — a nice old-fashioned one — and Julia arrives as soon as all is in order.

You don't expect an *oraison funèbre* from me. Peace to the dead. I never could give her my sincere affection, but I honestly gave some admiration — and a great deal of kindness, which I hope will be counted to my credit in some future life.

Do you recollect Rome? I think I shall be fond of it. Perhaps the spirit will move me to write once more. After all it is fun. And fun is a great god as you know. . . . My dear friend I wish you for this year, and always, the best that I can wish.

Your
H.

(7)

[*After Lisl's Death*]

Rome: January 30, 1892.

. . . Since I wrote to you Lisl is dead. Perhaps you have heard of it through the Fiedlers or Wachs. I wonder if it recalls past friendship to you, or if the breach was too wide even for memory? I could talk with you about it but am at a loss to soliloquise, because I don't know if enmity or goodwill prevails in your heart. For this reason I did not inform you at once; also because I thought I should get a letter from you. I often go to the Post Office to ask, and hate to go

Impressions that Remained

away disappointed. Have you seen a cat return to its saucer every five minutes to see if perchance milk has not grown there again? And fancy if it waits a week between each trip and still finds nothing! . . .

(8)

Rome: February 8, 1892.

. . . I am glad to hear you speak of Lisl as you do. Very glad. With your Celtic exuberance of expression you once spoke, or rather wrote, about her in a way that grieved me and shut me up on that subject, though I hoped, as it has turned out, that sometimes you felt otherwise. It was about having wasted your time and your treasures on her. No, you certainly did not waste your time, as your sorrow for her now proves. You really did love her, and that in itself is enough. Perhaps she returned less than you gave; if so the loss was chiefly hers; but *as far as I know* I don't think the word traitor applies to her. It may be that I have not all the facts (you speak sometimes as though I had not) but I doubt if you have them either or have ever quite realised the cruel position she was in. Yes, we were on quite friendly terms, she and I; never intimate of course — firstly because there was a big silence between us about you and the —s,¹¹ and then because of something so German about her that all my Latin colours glowed at once with redoubled fury as soon as we met. But she had a wonderful grace of moods which I could not look at without admiration, and I suppose she had the penetration of her sex in finding this out, and so liked me well enough, as an unclassable curiosity of a brother-in-law. Julia was fond of her in the usual proper, sisterly fashion but nothing out of the way, whereas she worshipped her mother, to whose shortcomings her eyes were lovingly blind; and the minor loss has been swamped in the greater one. Love is good no matter whom it goes to; and if perchance to one's mother, who would protest or breathe a word?

I am glad you grieve over Lisl, because a great affection ending in total indifference is inexpressibly sad to me. Why go on with one's self, with the same body and the same name, why not blow one's brains out and make a fresh start if such things can be forgotten? Times may change and trouble may come, even strife and separation; but something must surely remain as long as those who have

¹¹ The couple who had done so much mischief seven years previously.

In the Desert

loved one another remain alive — respect for the feelings they wrought together, and gratitude therefore to one another. You cannot at all be sure, I should fancy, that because Lisl turned away from you and held aloof, or was hard or unjust on some point or other, she had forgotten. I imagine not. She was too musical to forget, and her eyes were too deep and pure. The strife and separation were necessities of the foreground, one of the tragedies we are called on to play without knowing why. I wish you could have been sure of this, and, as you say, have joined hands for a minute; but unless you have very strong proof to the contrary — something of which I am quite ignorant — judge her by yourself, and what she felt by what you feel.

I have not spoken to you yet about the Mass and Levi's verdict. . . . You happy clever one to have made yourself intelligible! I envy you, with affectionate pride and joy. I never shall have that luck, or skill . . . or goodness? Perhaps it is goodness, warmth of feeling for others, that makes one clear to them. If it were not for the thought that perhaps it is goodness that does it I would go to sleep comfortably in my obscurity. You see we have two rôles in the world; one as human beings, and the other as cosmic atoms, grains of dust filtering eternally through space. As human being I don't seem to have got on very far somehow, but as cosmic atom *je suis très réussi*, I assure you! Of course the question may arise: "was kann ich mir dafür kaufen?"¹² but such mercantile meditations must be instantly repressed. Only the other thought remains: perhaps it is a lack of love for others that makes what one has to say a hard saying for them. One tunes one's guitar for a great song, and nothing is heard save a sound of riddles. I will arise and go unto my Father and will say unto him: Give me a slate and a piece of chalk that I may work out the problem of life eternal. Funny and sad. But after all that is not such a bad mixture; a sort of gooseberry tart in morals. . . .

I don't tell you anything about Lisl's last months because you must have heard all from the Fiedlers. I am glad you feel in sympathy with them. I saw them again with a distinct feeling of pleasure.

Good-night to you.

H.

¹² What can be purchased with that?

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